

SRI ANIRVAN

Letters from a Baul

LIFE WITHIN LIFE

SRI AUROBINDO PATHAMANDIR

CALCUTTA

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PREFACE

This book consists chiefly of letters from Sri Anirvan to L.R. and of recorded conversations that took place during their numerous meetings, in Almora, in Assam and Bengal. A few of Sri Anirvan's essays have been added, as well as "Rambling Thoughts"* shared with his devoted students.

Before his death he read the present text carefully and revised it by shortening certain things or adding what he felt was needed to express better his own ideas. In his lifetime he neither taught nor wrote about his ideas in a dogmatic way but spoke very directly to seekers or passers-by who came to him with their problems, which filled their minds and hearts full of anxiety.

Sri Anirvan was a Baul, a solitary man with no ashram surrounding him, who received in exactly the same way a cloth merchant from the near-by hamlet and a Member of Parliament residing in the District. His approach was very simple. He wanted no sign of veneration. He knew how to listen without haste, even when his available time was limited. One felt in him a widely cultured man, and this impression was heightened by his attitude of respect toward his visitors.

He always spoke with reference to the Science of Samkhya, not the philosophical Samkhya as taught by Vijnana Bhikshu in the XV^e century, but that Samkhya which is the essence of life — like a pure Voice coming from the Vedas and the Upanishads, revealing a gnostic wisdom concerning the Fullness of Great Nature and the order of the Cosmic Laws. He made immediately clear to his visitors that to live in accordance with the Cosmic Laws, which are all-powerful, involves following a long course of inner discipline aimed at cultivating mental concentration and giving a right direction to the will. This wisdom is in fact a mystical approach which derives from the primal substance.

Sri Anirvan was a Bengali, born the eldest son of Sri

* The title 'Rambling Thoughts' was given by Shri Anirvan to these talks.

Raj Chandra Dhar, in 1896, at Mymensing, in the Eastern part of the country. At the age of thirteen he already wanted to follow his father, who had joined the vast Ashram of Swami Nigamananda in Assam; but the Guru of that Ashram decided that he should have a university career in order to be able to serve the Saraswat Sangha to the best of his ability.

Accordingly he went from Dacca, where he first studied, to Calcutta University and there, in 1918, he got the title of Kavyatirtha, the highest degree in Vedic and Panini Grammars. His return to the Saraswat Sangha was a festive day for all the disciples. During each vacation that he spent at the Ashram, he had been for them all "the beloved poet" illuminating the talks of the Guru, and making the work on themselves seen like labouring on the land to bring forth a garden of fruits and flowers.

In time he became Swami Nirvanananda Saraswati and served his Guru faithfully. But after a number of years, one night — with the blessing of his Guru who knew that he would never bow to any other darshana — he left the Ashram with only his staff in hand.

As a Baul, he took the name of Anirvan. It was no doubt Nirvacaniya becoming, with an "a" privatif, a-nir-vac-aniya, which corresponds syllable by syllable to in-ex-plic-able in English, the root meaning being clear in the former and figurative in the latter. In general, people called him "Maharaj," and those who knew him: "servant of the Rishis."

Although he never spoke of his past, through his letters we learn of some striking incidents in his life. As a Baul he simply disappeared, becoming a traditional wanderer through the Himalayas. He lived for some years in a cave at the foot of the Kamakhya Hill in Assam. Later he was discovered apparently as an anonymous "man walking through the market place." This was in Delhi where, while working as a tutor, he was translating the books of Rama Tirtha because he thought that the Bengali needed to listen to his voice. He was reputed to have become a consultant on many

difficult philosophical problems posed by scriptures ranging from the Bhagavad Gita to the Gathas of old Iranian Prophets.

Still later, some people from Ranchi called on him for help. They wanted to have a few chapters of *The Life Divine* of Sri Aurobindo translated into Bengali. This huge work had been written originally in English. Fascinated as he was by the text, Sri Anirvan accepted on condition that their Guru, Sri Aurobindo, would agree. The result was that Sri Anirvan retired for four years to Almora in order to give his whole time to translating the entire work.

Against his will, many people, including refugees, knocked at his door. They harassed him so much that a very simple kind of life was organized around him to protect him; it was devoid of encouragements to stay!

When, in due course, Sri Anirvan came to translate the "Third Mandala of the Vedas," his work became even more intense. He needed more helpers as well as complete isolation. It was at this point that I, L.R., among a few others, came into his circle.

At first I felt completely disoriented. We lived near his dwelling in small houses near the forest. In complete solitude the importance of each action was evaluated and accepted as a model of inner discipline on a wider scale. The previous kind of work I had done had equipped me so all I had to do was simply to conform.

To meet him, to work with him, and to attend our gathering every evening to prepare the work of the next day, was an invaluable teaching in itself. At night, we sat around a bowl of rice and a cup of milk. Very little was said. But a real spiritual atmosphere was created. No formal teaching was given but an awareness within oneself became a definite part of one's being.

This stage of life, however, was not to last. We knew that one day he was going to say: "The work is over. I shall be gone in less than three days." And so it happened.

As a Baul he was a completely free man. All that remains

are his letters, which contain the kind of advice a Baul can give:

“The days that you were here appear so soft through the fading light of the past. We can always flit away to the Infinite through the door of the inner being. Can the march over hills and dales ever end? Remember that expansion is not doing anything, it is only being and becoming. The Spirit is and the manifestation does. It grows from the centre outwards just like the sprouting of a seed, quiescent, and yet the initiator of all movement. Remember that you are both Spirit and manifestation in yourself. That is why I am repeating: Be yourself.”

The book appears thanks to the Pathamandir of Calcutta whose members were intimately associated with Sri Anirvan. Whenever he came to the plains or stayed in Calcutta, he gave regular lectures and readings of *The Life Divine*, *Savitri* and *Upanishads*.

L.R.

PART I

THE PRINCIPLES

A STATE OF SAHAJA

The *Katha Upanishad* says: "The aim is to attain pure Existence (*sat*).¹ He who has realized this has a clear understanding of what reality is. Pure Existence is the Truth beyond life and death.¹ That you exist is a fact! And your existence is nothing but a manifestation of that which is universal and transcendental. So your existence becomes oneness (*kaivalya*) in which there exist the two principles of Samkhya: Purusha, which is the spirit, and Prakriti, which is "that which is manifested." Spirituality cannot be acquired; it can only be derived from these two principles.

Open yourself up to the sun of pure Existence (*sat*) as the bud of a flower opens to the light. Then the Truth will flow into you. Impatience spoils everything! There is a Baul song which says: "The stars, the suns, and the moons are never impatient. Silently, they follow the stream of pure Existence, as the true Guru does."

Now, this pure Existence, lived with a wide-open heart amid all the circumstances of life, is in itself the state of *sahaja* — a state in which the mind is freed from all duality. The motionless mind knows "That" which has neither beginning nor end, which is free in its very essence.

Sahaja is a *yoga* for the same reason as all other *yogas*. It is a path that leads to the discovery of "That with which one is born," the pure being living in the temple of the heart.

Sahaja can be defined as follows: "That which is born in you, that which is born with you", a state of pure essence. The body, the spirit, the impulse of life and intelligence are all there. Nothing must be rejected or mutilated, so that

¹ RV. X, 127.2.

NOTE: In accordance with the custom, Purusha is always written with a capital P in this text. Prakriti has a capital P when indicating a higher Prakriti and has a small p when indicating a lower prakriti.

“one and the same thing” can be consciously established.

That is why Samkhya, which is the path by which the state of *sahaja* is attained, speaks a great deal of the waking state that is the normal level of all activity. It also speaks of the state of consciousness interiorized in dreams, which later becomes the state of deep sleep. The fourth state, that of inner awakening, is the mark of deep sleep. Shankaracharya¹, instructs us about these four different states in his philosophy.

In *sahaja*, there is a fifth state, that of a totally awakened consciousness; it contains in itself the four states of wakefulness, dreaming, deep sleep, and the state in which deep sleep exists along with the other four states. There is no longer any differentiation between the various states, all of them being unified at a single point.

From that moment on, everything becomes your food. Everything is one and the same thing in you. Then you are faced with a new task in the realm of sensation and relaxation. It becomes a question of forgetting oneself, of voluntarily obliterating oneself, which is a letting go in a region that is very subtle and hard to discover.² Voluntary forgetting is a task that is just as difficult as accustoming one's mental faculty to remembering the details of self-observation. It is only approached much later, when memory has become submissive and fulfils its true role.

This is slow work and a true discipline in itself. The effort to forget ceases when the contraction that determines the field of work disappears. Without contraction there can be no directed effort. When this effort is recognized, the contraction disappears and is at once replaced by a very special kind of attention coming from very far away. This attention is indifferent to what is going on and yet it watches closely. It gives no orders and does not know impatience. It simply watches how Great Nature (*prakriti*) operates, for even in

¹ The greatest master of Advaita philosophy (788-822).

² This means a forgetting of the ordinary “I”, that is, the superficial structure of the individual.

the subtle domain of voluntary forgetfulness prakriti has still to be reckoned with.

To wish to forget is, in fact, impossible. Forgetting proceeds from a principle without any form. When your being is invaded by a movement coming from the heart and the mind, you are just like an empty vibrating bell filled by the echo of a sound coming from elsewhere.

Accept within yourself the idea that you have only twenty-four hours to live. Let those hours be full of clarity to help you to accomplish your task. Do not allow them to be tarnished. They have been entrusted to you. Those twenty-four hours are your eternity. In the face of this three-dimensional day, it is impossible to imagine the future. Do not attempt to stretch the time, nor to divide it, nor to lengthen or shorten it. Everything is so full and at the same time so empty!

The discipline of *sahaja* begins with the acceptance of the whole of life just as it is. The heart opens up to receive it and to live it. As for intelligence and logic, they will seek in Samkhya the necessary strength for finding the key to the enigma of existence. *Sahaja* then appears like a path illumined by the experience of inner being.

In practice, Samkhya is a technique to realize the expansion of *sahaja*. Neither the one nor the other takes into account gods, demons, paradises, hells, or formalism of any kind, in the course of inner effort. The point where Samkhya and *sahaja* converge is in the whole of life, which becomes in itself the object of meditation. Therefore serenity within oneself and a right relationship with life and one's fellow beings becomes a way of being.

He who practices a spiritual discipline (*sādhana*) will use Samkhya to learn how to look at the movements of Great Nature in all its manifestations without interfering with its movements, to recognize its imprint on everything and to observe the ability of prakriti to pass imperceptibly from one plane of consciousness to another. Not to react

to any of its movements would, in fact, mean, to live in the very heart of life without being affected by it. But at the beginning, this state cannot be taken for granted, for it is not merely by observing the movements of prakriti that one becomes its master.

The disciple will turn his gaze upon himself and discover, although he had never before seen it, the countless inner disturbances created by everything in him that says: "I like and I do not like; I want and I do not want; it's right and it's wrong," and so forth, which prevent him from noticing that in himself there is a stormy prakriti identical to the one that exists around him.

How can he dissociate himself from that prakriti which until he dies will always be for him his life, his mind and his body with all their functions? At this point traditional Raja-yoga comes to help. This *yoga*, through its graduated disciplines, brings the body to a state of conscious joy, one's life to a state of equanimity comparable to complete rest and one's mind to ecstasy (*samādhi*).¹ In this state of equanimity, all the automatic movements of prakriti and its unconscious play can be perceived. Always, in following this inner discipline, the ideal of Samkhya is to learn how to stand back, and the ideal of *yoga* is *vairāgya*, which means to learn how to observe oneself dispassionately and without judgment.

Long and meticulous work is indispensable in order to discover that emotion of any kind creates a passionate movement which takes man out of himself. In this case *yoga* teaches how to check any impetuous movement by emptying the mind of all images. The superabundant energy is thus brought back to the self. But the purpose of Samkhya is that this energy, having returned to the self, should also be directed consciously towards the outer life, that it should become openly active without disturbing the inner or outer prakriti. In this way life-energy is purified. It becomes creative. Of course, this state can only last for a few minutes, and the ordinary man immediately reappears with his train

¹ The state of ecstasy comprising different degrees.

of habitual reactions within the play of manifestation.

This moment of illumination (*sattva*) and this word is right even if the moment be brief, is a look into oneself and at the same time a look outside oneself (*śivadr̥ṣṭi*). Symbolically, it can be compared to the piercing look of Puruṣa into himself and upon the active Prakṛiti around him. To accept Prakṛiti in its totality is pure sahaja. In a subtle manner, beyond "I like and I don't like," it brings a possibility of modification in the densities of the intrinsic qualities (*guṇas*)¹ of the lower prakṛiti and shows the path by which a higher Prakṛiti can be reached.

Learn to return voluntarily to what is fundamentally primitive in you, carefully hidden and disguised in the realm of instinct, intuition, and sex. This conscious return will produce unsuspected reactions and induce outbursts of all your dormant impatience. If you were a tree, they would all of them be branches issuing from the same trunk. One cannot cut off one branch without damaging the whole; cutting several of them would cause the death of the tree. All the branches together form the canopy of foliage.

In the wind, the foliage is in harmony with the whole forest. It is in the foliage that the birds nest and sing. May this picture help you in your spiritual discipline, even if it is very hard. If something obscure lingers in you, it means that there must still be an attachment somewhere, just as in the tree there are knots which hinder the rising of the sap.

You can absorb ideas and make them your own. You can freely create ways to express them. That is what the force in you can do. Perhaps I can help you to discover your own power but only by suggestion. If you open yourselves up and discover who you are, I shall be pleased.

A great *tapasyā* awaits you. This word means personal austerity and voluntary discipline.

The expression "voluntary discipline" connects two ideas:

¹ See page 17.

that of heat and that of light. These are clearly the creative energy and the wisdom so often described in the *Upanishads* as being together the first manifestation of the creative urge. One of the *Upanishads* even goes so far as to say that it is a radiation devoid of any specific characteristic, that is, without form (*alingam*).

True *tapasyā* means to be one with the creative power of Prakriti. It brings us close to Great Nature as she really is. One voluntarily drops all accumulations, all that has been acquired, and returns to what is simple and innate. Austerities, both mental and physical, to which many a seeker subjects himself, are only the fumbling means adopted by ignorant souls wishing to attain that entirely natural end.

Allow your power to radiate, and may this radiation be your discipline. Hear the resonance of this call in you and, without tension of any sort, have the courage to plunge into the depths of your soul. Do not listen to the sophisticated sayings of the wiseacres who teach with pomp and ostentation.

Understood in this manner, *tapasyā* is the progressive development of limitless intuition. There are two kinds of *tapasyā*. One in which I always say "yes" — *tantras*, and one in which I always say "no" — Vedanta. The true seeker who says "yes" is a born poet, for he finds himself obliged to translate everything into exalted thoughts and language. His poetry plays the role of a science of transmutation.

In *sahaja* there is a close correspondence between the Baul and the Sufi, provided that the "underground current" of spiritual life brings the mind of each one to grasp the secret and to live it in his own light.

As soon as one attempts to describe Hinduism in terms of circles and cycles, and Sufism in terms of four degrees, one is lost. Immediately one enters the world of division and quarrels.

How is it that the Sufis have discovered the content of the *Upanishads*, that freedom of which they sing, when, in

fact, the *Upanishads* are unknown to most of them? Each one, at his appointed time, must break the shell in which he is enclosed, so as to penetrate into knowledge; just as a fully formed chick must break out of the eggshell if it wishes to live its life.

In the final stage, there is no longer any discipline but only an uninterrupted consciousness of being. If the entire being is immersed in *sahaja* (the Sufi calls it *fanā*), I "know" how, in myself, without efforts the current of a right relationship is established, which dissolves everything false or halting in my relationship with myself and with my fellow men.

The Bauls and the Sufis tread the same path in life and drink from the same eternal source; they are above every kind of sectarianism. They do not practice any formal initiation; they speak, however, of two kinds of initiation.

One is compared to the sun touching the bud of a flower, inviting it to open. A power is transfused from the Master to his disciple simply by radiation, without ritual or words. That is all. The bud of the flower retains all its individuality.

The other initiation, at a still higher level, is compared to the sun which absorbs the dew into itself. At a glance the Master recognizes the real disciple, whether he be a Baul or a Sufi. His look captures the reflection of the disciple's being as in a mirror; then the eyes of the Master and the eyes of the disciple close. But the current between them will continue to flow eternally. This is called the process of saturation.

But the time comes when the Master becomes an obstacle to the flowering of the disciple. The cult of the person falls away, and also the cult of devotion to ideas. The question arises, "Why do I obey?" And the answer is, "The Guru of the Guru of my Guru is walking ahead on the same path as I. Can I reach the source by myself alone, making do without any intermediaries?"

That is the beginning of a long and undeclared war with many painful stages against the Guru. The true Guru will

be aware of this struggle. He watches closely the disordered movements of the disciple. His kindness is such that he speaks with his disciple about the one who walks ahead, about the Laws of working on oneself; yet he does nothing to attenuate the struggle which has begun.

At the end of this stage there is *sahaja* when the disciple finally opens the eyes of his heart and understands that he has gone astray. On this subject Keshab Das¹ has said, "I discover that I am what I was, but between the two there are only complications. Now, I see...." The aim is the Truth, through which the unity of all things can be perceived. This truth is *sahaja*.

The Master of a Baul or of a Sufi teaches nothing directly; he merely stimulates his disciple by suggestions. Once initiated, the disciple feels that a force drives him forward, but he will always have to struggle alone in the world around him, in the very heart of all life's complications.

My one ambition has been to learn how to speak without words. That is, to be the smoke of a fire that others do not see, or the sound of music that others do not hear. It has taken me fifty years. Two ideas have always been in my mind. The first of these was to be the traveller who follows a trail with a precise goal: to touch God and to serve Him. The second was the idea of expansion: to know how to flow out like a gas without any destination, for the *rşis* have said, "Those who have attained pure Existence (*sat*) become the One."

So many people come to see me who only want words! If I do not speak, they are upset. So I speak in a poetic way and that keeps them occupied for a while.

But where are those to whom I can entrust a task in life, one single task that would be the expression of their spiritual fervour? If you are not a ploughman, what do you know about ploughing? If you are not a man of action, what do you know about a task to be fulfilled? In the seed-bed of

¹ XVIth century.

thought, action, prayer and meditation coexist in the sensation of being, and action is not what men have made of it — something subjective and hypocritical, far removed from the centre of being.

You do not know that all creation is born of an action? To live is also an action. To live could be the fact of acknowledging the “Man in the temple of the heart” and serving him perfectly.

SAMKHYA

Samkhya is, above all, the practical philosophy transmitted by Kapila, who lived in the far distant past.¹

Samkhya gives a clear idea of the "Purusha-spirit" and of "Prakriti-manifestation" represented by "Great Nature." The latter is manifested essentially in a mechanical manner, like all the cosmic Laws which govern us.

I know how difficult it is to explain deep spiritual values. That is why I think the best link between the things of the beyond with the things of this world is that of practical psychology. Psychology speaks a universally known language.

Samkhya is the only religious philosophy that speaks a psychological language, hence a scientific language. Everything can be explained from the point of view of Samkhya. It is the basis of the Buddhist *piṭakas*,² as well as of the Sufi precepts. It is no more concerned with rites or with dogmas than are the *Upanishads*.

Nothing exists, in any realm, that by deduction does not proceed from a higher Law. There comes a time when one must submit to such a deductive process. This process is pure Samkhya; it is the inexorable descent into Prakriti, under pressure from above of the great Will. From that moment onwards everything functions in a mechanical way: the higher intelligence (*buddhi*), the soul, the ego, all the centres of the human being, each one with its natural intelligence. The mechanicity functions from the moment when connections start between the different levels of the being: its inner organs of perception (*indriyas*) or senses, its constituent elements (*bhūtas*) and densities.

When "he who knows" effects the descent voluntarily,

¹ R.V. X, 27-6.

² Teaching of the Buddha in Pali. Collected by his disciples a hundred years after his death.



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and reaches the lowest point, that is to say, the nadir, his being becomes radiant. At that moment he enters consciously into the discipline of a clearly conscious upward movement.

Man is by nature inductive; he gropes his way forward and goes blindly along. Woman, on the other hand, is by nature actively passive, for her function is to create the child. From her are born husband and father. All manifestations, mind, soul, life, matter, have come from her. In that respect she is the "Divine Mother," the foundation from which the slow ascent towards the source begins.

It is said in the *Bhagavatam*¹ that, at the time when Samkhya arrived on the earth, a woman was the first to benefit by it. This woman was called Devahuti.² She represents the higher Prakriti. Devahuti realized this knowledge to its ultimate limit. Having rejected everything that was not the pure and luminous "I," she is said to have wandered in nature, completely naked, radiating light. At the moment of death, she transformed herself voluntarily into an inexhaustible river in order to water the whole earth and allow hundreds of thousands of beings to quench their thirst for knowledge.

The spiritual science of Samkhya can make a saint out of a man who no longer has any faith in God or in himself.

In the beginning, Samkhya appears to be appallingly dry and lacking in love, for imagination and any kind of emotion are strictly set aside. But when the inner being has recovered his lost equilibrium and discovered the equilibrium which he had thus far never felt, he is nourished by a pure love which no longer has any root in human love.

The adept of Samkhya finds his point of support in his own inner attitude, in a conscious effort to understand "what there is." To reach this attitude, he makes use of everything that he has discovered, everything that he has experienced

¹ *Srimadbhagavatam* or *Bhagavatapurana* is traditionally attributed to Vyasa, the author of the *Mahabharata*.

² See p. 137.

up to the time when he begins his search. His material consists of events in his life which enlarge his plane of consciousness, harmonize the microcosm that he is, and reveal the relation existing between the known universe and the unknown universe around him. Even if he has neither a prayer nor a petition, he has, on the other hand, an attitude of openness. He questions and he observes. He searches within himself for a familiar sensation so as to face the perfect and absolute cosmic Law which unfolds. He knows that it is through overcoming obstacles that the inner being will make a fresh effort to attain a wider level of consciousness. To hold to this openness entails attentive vigilance and an immense work of amassing details upon details, until the first of them are clearly perceived. To lead such a life is to live a prayer.

The following example, taken from a Tantric text formulates it like this: "Let your body become hard like dry wood. Then your inner felicity (*rasa*) will be like sugar syrup. Let the fire of your spiritual discipline (*sādhana*) purify this syrup until it becomes candied sugar; this candied sugar will at first be brown, but finally it will become as transparent as rock crystal. May your inner felicity resemble rock crystal; then your love will be as pure as Krishna's."

In order to taste this experience, there are two methods on opposite levels. In the one case, stimulants and drugs are utilized by the physical body. In the other case, the spiritual body consciously becomes more and more refined and, in full awareness, reaches a strictly graduated interiorization. This conscious lucidity will then be continuous like the tracks of a caterpillar on the earth.

Then a stage of knowledge will be reached, that is, a knowledge that is searching for itself and gradually discovers itself. At its highest point, after a very delicate attunement, this knowledge becomes true compassion or pure objective love.

In Vedanta and for the Vedantist, if felicity is not reached in the complete passivity of all the centres of the being, the upward path is nothing but renunciation and frustration.

Vedanta denies all reality, while the Samkhya discipline affirms that everything is reality (*sat*). In prakriti, which by nature is mechanical, three densities have to be acknowledged and gone beyond matter, energy, and spirit, and to reach finally the cosmic force that contains them all. Higher reality, or pure Existence (*sat*) beyond manifestation, is expressed by the unity of these three densities. Behind it stands Purusha.

The essential condition of this discipline is the possibility of absorption which continually increases until it becomes total. To start with, everything appears heavy and opaque, like a clod of earth that little by little, as understanding broadens, appears like pure rock crystal.

The soul's felicity (*vilāsa-vivarta*) is the state in which the unreal becomes real and vice versa.

In attempting this a Christian risks himself with difficulty, for he has to take into account a "sinful body" which weighs very heavily. The Christian places his point of support ahead of him in God, who gives him strength and consolation. He prays, invokes, and gives thanks. He is a worshipper (*bhakta*) before his Lord (*iṣṭadevatā*). The great majority of Hindus are also worshippers.

In Samkhya, several themes for meditation are taught which date from the time of the *Vedas*.

For example, the idea of the opposite pairs of zenith-nadir (what is above and what is below), or Purusha-Prakriti, is graphically pictured by two points linked by an ideal line going vertically from the zenith to the nadir. But in living experience one perceives in meditation that it is quite different. Actually, these two poles of zenith and nadir are not opposites, but are joined in a continuous movement that starts from the zenith, describes a vast semicircle to the right and reaches the nadir at the bottom of the curve. After having penetrated the nadir, this same movement re-ascends to the left towards the zenith, forming the same semicircle as on the right. It gives a picture of a large round vessel with the nadir at the bottom.

The energy that descends from the zenith is fully conscious of its movement. In full force it condenses, breaks down any resistance on the way, and penetrates the inner being which, having seen it coming, has hidden itself, coiled three and a half times, in the nadir. This coil is what the energy has to break up.

A Guru of Samkhya explains this state as follows: energy penetrates the dark night until the energy itself becomes inert and without reaction. At that very moment it becomes entirely one with the heavy matter.

In the nadir of prakriti, the threefold coil represents the three distinct and complementary qualities (*gunas*) of prakriti itself. In the descending movement, white (spirit), red (energy), and black (matter) follow one another in the order of the colours at sunset. In the re-ascending movement toward the zenith, the colours follow one another as at dawn: black (matter), red (energy), and white (spirit).

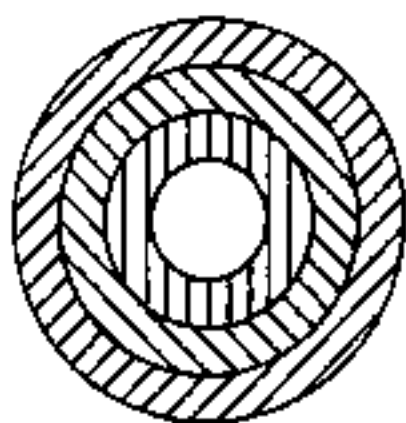
The last half-coil remaining besides the three coils of the *gunas* was, during the entire process of the descent, the hiding place of the active consciousness of Purusha. It represents the last redoubt of the individuality-spirit through which the re-ascent can take place.

In this picture, the conqueror, conscious of the road he must follow, resolutely penetrates into the darkness of matter and its heavy densities to reach the very heart of prakriti. To complete his course, he has to break down the last half-coil of prakriti which is holding him back. Only then will he emerge from the struggle a hero.

Throughout the conscious and voluntary descent into the heaviness of the human body down to the nadir, a clear vision makes it possible to perceive what will be the ascending path starting from the nadir, for the stages and steps of the descent are analogous to those of the re-ascent.

There is also a theme of deep meditation which consists in seeing the three *gunas* as if they were concentric surfaces, one within the other. Thus, we have the picture of four concentric barriers which delimit them, one within the other;

the one delimiting matter is outside, those delimiting energy are inside, as well as the one in the centre which delimits the spirit. The space in the centre represents a zone of perfect calm, the Void.



As soon as the perfect calmness of the inner space is perceived, the image of concentric surfaces is obliterated and the fact of existing is now experienced but very subtly, as if a state of active consciousness could be compared to a thin streak of light which at the same time is filling the sky. The result is an all-encompassing sensation of fluidity along the spinal column. The sensation is that of a very fine vibrating matter ascending from below. This sensation is like the radiance of light which fills space.

The three *guṇas* constitute the equilibrium of Purusha. Whatever takes place, the constant balance between the qualities and the substances that compose the *guṇas* remains. They move always in the same order, that is, from matter (*tamas*) to energy (*rajas*), then to spirit (*sattva*), or, in the reverse order, from spirit (*sattva*) to energy (*rajas*) down to matter (*tamas*). At the moment of sunrise and sunset, one can feel in oneself the very delicate transition from one density to the other, from one quality to the other and see the change from one colour to another. That is why, traditionally, these are the moments in which the *guṇas* form the background and the theme of all meditation.

There are two Samkhyas: the first is philosophical, the second, mystical. Philosophical Samkhya, formulated by

Ishvara Krishna,¹ is recognized in India as being the system of basic thought that indicates to the yogi, as well as to the anchorite, the ascending path of spiritual search. It is a profoundly negative philosophy which had an influence on the whole of life in India in the Middle Ages. This is all that is known of Samkhya in the West.

But this Samkhya is also a mystical path, enshrined in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, which, in the course of centuries, has found its free and clear expression in the *Puranas* and the *Tantras*, especially in the later sacred scriptures. It can be said that the whole Tantric way of life is none other than a Samkhya whose sources can be discovered in the most ancient Vedic verses.

In this, the world is not denied. The principle of supreme bliss (*ānanda*) is recognized, but it is called by another name, *samprasāda*, which, in the *Upanishads*, is the state of "dreamless" sleep, a sleep in which the spirit is awakened within. Nothing is present to experience anything at all. There exists only a calm joy which can carry over into the waking state. There is no question of fleeing from pain, but rather of experiencing it as the embrace in which Kali enfolds Shiva prostrate beneath her. This is technically described in the *Tantras* by the word *viparitarati* (or the inverted coitus), in which the Purusha is passively accepting even death and destruction from the active Prakriti. Evil and pain, from which the world-negating Vedanta assiduously turns away, are transformed here into bliss (*Ananda*).

But the mystics have added something further to their experience. They have felt that, for a realized soul, suffering itself is no more than a ripple in the current of bliss. It was in reference to this that Shri Ramakrishna² was able to say, "Everything is *sat-cit-ānanda*. Even my suffering is only a part of the experience of existing and it has very little place in the total experience of 'being', in the consciousness of bliss."

¹ The author of a treatise called *Samkhya Karika*, in the third century A.D.

² Shri Ramakrishna died of cancer of the throat in 1886, at the age of fifty-four at Dakshineswar near Calcutta.

From this profound experience, Samkhya, integrated into life as it is in the *Bhagavad Gita*, looks upon Prakriti as being threefold: the lower prakriti (*aparā*), the higher Prakriti (*parā*), and the highest Prakriti that is our very own (*paramā* or *svīyā*).

The philosophical Samkhya takes into consideration only the lower prakriti, which is merely a complex of the qualities of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, permanently intermingled, although one of them must necessarily predominate. But a pure quality (*śuddha sattva*) can also exist, which is neither touched nor soiled by *rajas* and *tamas*. This, then, would be the highest Prakriti that is many times mentioned in Puranic and Tantric literature. This idea of pure *sattva* reigns over all the practical philosophies of the Hindu mystics.

This pure quality is nothing other than eternal bliss (non-existent in *rajas*) and eternal illumination (non-existent in *tamas*) co-existing in the spiritual being. This is the entire concept of *sat-cit-ānanda* common to the mystical philosophies of Samkhya and Vedanta.

Vijnana Bhikshu, a great Master of the school of Samkhya in the fifteenth century, has given us the following metaphor in connection with Purusha and Prakriti: "Prakriti is Purusha's wife; she is shrewd and peevish. She gives Purusha no respite, until he becomes so harassed that he finally says, 'I am going away, do what you like!' Then Prakriti runs after her husband in tears, implores him, and clings to him...." These are the two ways of dealing with prakriti, before and after having realized what she is. The cosmic Law closest to us tells us, "As soon as you become detached from prakriti, everything follows you."

Swami Rama Tirtha¹ has given us another picture, "If you turn your back to the sun, your shadow is in front of you. You can try to catch it, but you will never succeed. But the minute you turn to face the sun, your shadow is

¹ Rama Tirtha, who died in 1906, went to the United States after Swami Vivekananda's time. While there, he spoke magnificently about Vedanta; he created no organization, saying, "The whole of India is my ashram."

behind you. If you move, it follows you. You can make it go where you wish. The sun is truth, the shadow is Prakriti."

It is easy for us to talk about the changes in our consciousness, the broadening of our understanding, but not so easy to speak of the readjustments of our relationship with the world, for the matter of the body is heavy. And the many envelopes of the body (*koṣas*) are not mere illusions, as the envelopes of the mind often are.

Purusha can do nothing for us, since we are the slaves of prakriti. Purusha is outside of time and beyond our understanding, whereas prakriti exists in time. It is at once the aggregate of the qualities (*guṇas*) that we can evaluate and the aggregate of the movements and impressions (*saṁskāras*) of all those qualities that make up our life. Purusha is a flash of perception, while prakriti operates in an integral mechanism.

Between the two there is the sacrifice of Purusha, which in time takes on a form. For example, the efforts of the Buddha can be perceived by us. If we talk about the efforts of the Buddha on our scale, we have a certain perception of something. But of what?

An exact relationship exists between prakriti, which moves spontaneously, mechanically, always in circles, and Purusha, outside of time, which merely looks on at what is happening. In spiritual life, this relationship appears at the exact point where voluntary detachment breaks the bonds which have been established by prakriti. In the life of the Buddha, the period of detachment is represented by the first half of his asceticism. Later on, while looking from afar at what is happening, he becomes increasingly interested in the game in which he no longer participates and observes the smallest errors of each participant. Then, without hindering their manner of playing, he urges them by his spiritual strength alone to stand aside like himself, so that they, too, can watch the game. In this way, at the proper time, he gives them the chance to see the prakriti from which they are withdrawing, as he himself sees it. The subtle energy that is

here described has become the aura of the Buddha; it is simply the lower prakriti transformed and illuminated.

In active spiritual life, one proceeds only by negation. This constant negation, for Christians, has become resignation. We must not forget that whereas in Hinduism there is no beginning and no end, in Christianity there is no end but a beginning. The way of love (*bhakti*) has its place in the attitude of negation as well as in the attitude of resignation.

The path to the attainment of the state of "divine soul" is extremely long with precipices on both sides. This state of "divine soul" is limited to a very few and, even so, is always subject to the Laws of the all-powerful and mechanical prakriti. Jesus Christ himself was crucified; nothing was able to prevent the action set in motion by prakriti, which on our human level works exactly like the cosmic Laws and with equal intransigence.

Prakriti contains everything that exists. It is the divine womb of all manifestation. In prakriti one can observe three different degrees:

1. Everything of which we are made: soul, intelligence, ego, life, mind, and the animal matter of our body.
2. The very principle of our possible evolution on all planes of our psychic and physical being.
3. The divine energy (*śakti*) in its most subtle elements.

In one sense, all is materiality. In the *Vedas*, the word *tanu* means the body as well as everything to do with incarnation, and the word *ātman* means the spirit and everything connected with its energy or life. These words are interchangeable and are constantly being used for one another, since they both express the same materiality. There is no difference between spirit and matter; it is only a question of different densities.

When a piece of coal is white hot, it is impossible to say whether it is burning matter or a cluster of flames symbolizing the spirit. Here we have a phenomenon of transubstantiation that is visible in the heart of the spiritual experience.

The essential characteristic of India is that nothing is ever rejected. What was a simple Vedic sacrifice has been transformed in the course of centuries into a ritual of such complexity that it suggests a banyan tree sheltering at one and the same time a temple, a mosque, a saint, a bandit, devotees, animals, manure, and so on. It is a real jungle in which one can easily lose one's way. In it one finds "this and that and also That."

Hence the hoarding of objects in the Hindu temples. The minute one accepts the idea of form (*rūpa*), one can throw away nothing. Who is to decide what is true or false? Everything is of equal importance and equally worthy of attention. Each form has a name (*nāma*) and significance. This is so on every level.

The "too much" has a logic of its own, and logic is very far from the Divine. In the ceremonies, the forms have become all important and have driven out the spirit. Man plays with materiality with consummate art, without being aware of the mechanistic of prakriti, and without discovering that he is its slave.

One cannot change the course of prakriti, which goes its way according to a determined plan in the order of universal things and according to immutable Laws that it does not know. It knows only its own law. It does its work excellently and faultlessly. The energies divide and subdivide up to the point of feeding the cells of our body. They penetrate the heart and penetrate every drop of blood. At this point the body is an expression of "That."

Men are tossed about and carried along by a wave of which they cannot get free, but they can swim in the direction of the cavern of the heart. The seat of immobile consciousness is there. The movement of the wave has then ceased for these men, because they have put their attention to another order of reality. In the cavern of the heart they touch the immutable. One has to follow this process with an inward look and feel the pulsation of life. There is a known relation between the pulsation of life and the movement of the outer

wave just as there is a relation between the pulsation of life and the immobile consciousness. This movement is continuous. A sudden stop would mean death.

So long as we are immersed in prakriti, in ourselves and in life, we are governed by it, by its movements, its sudden jumps and its cosmic rhythms. Without withdrawing into ourselves, we can have no control over our prakriti.

It is impossible from outside to know whether the driver of a vehicle has control over himself or not. If he has, he can stop when he so decides. He knows that the wheels of the vehicle turn because of him. He is in control of his personal prakriti, which in its turn plays its role in a vaster Prakriti. The latter is itself the field of action of the great cosmic Laws.

There are two ways in which Great Nature constantly reacts toward Purusha: it remains in the centre of the movement, not to be drawn to one side or the other; or it follows the movement all the way. In any case, one must turn to the Void, which is the beginning as well as the end of all things.

Conscious energy (*śakti*) implies continuous growth which, even if it is not apparent and seems to start from darkness (*tamas*), is nonetheless real. It passes through the red-hot glow of active impulse (*rajas*) before reaching the whiteness of the rarefied state (*sattva*). This whiteness in life is the state of awakened consciousness.

Thus, we have to raise ourselves up step by step from the plane of gross matter up to the plane of awakened consciousness, and thus come back to heavy matter, retaining in ourselves as long as possible a continuous and right sensation. We are constantly harassed from outside by multiple shocks which bring forth in us either the desire to see God and experience a moment of illumination, or the anguish of death prowling in the shadows and bringing a state of deep depression. The dawn symbolizes the intermediate power of *śakti*. It is the light that begins to shine in the heart of the dark night.

Perched on the shaft, the driver of the bullock cart sees

the two big wooden wheels turning at the same time. One of them is life, the other death. Both wheels are equally necessary for the balance of the cart.¹

Discover in yourself the faith that shakes the world. Never say "Perhaps," but say "Yes" right away. This helps you to discover reactions in consciousness, to observe them and to make a choice. You must not accept the slavery of automatism in your reactions. Cut it off. It is possible. Refuse categorically to be the slave of your reactions. Have a deep desire to master them.

Accept primordial Nature as it exists in time, but withdraw from it and observe it from the plane of Purusha. The plane of Purusha is the plane of the spirit. This step is pure Samkhya. Believe that your evolution is possible even if your development is extremely slow.

Expect nothing whatsoever from anybody. Men are nothing but blind instruments, tools without freedom, driven by an invisible power that they do not even wish to know, for their eyes are not open. It is important to know whether our philosophy of life is effective. Only when circumstances overwhelm us do we see the movements of prakriti that surround us and notice that we ourselves are an integrated part of prakriti.

Then what we have perceived of pure Existence (*sat*) nourishes our inner being, no matter what for us has taken outwardly the form of victory or defeat. It is useless to regret the past. In our life experience, we have acted according to our understanding and our possibility at a particular moment. This is an inescapable Law which holds us in its orbit as long as we are the slaves of prakriti.

As soon as one withdraws consciously from prakriti, if only for an instant, its movement ceases. One emerges from it having touched the point of creation. This point gives an extremely pure sensation. It is often reached through "spiritual death," which is beyond all energy, beyond cogitations

¹ *Taittiriya Brahmana*.

of the ego. But the disciple should not desire at all costs to escape from the grip of prakriti, for it is the field in which his own movements can be discovered, closely studied, evaluated, and used.

Every time the boatman uses the oars, they are indispensable only when going against the current, he causes a rupture in the normal flow of the river. It is the same in the flow of life. To go consciously against the current creates an opposing movement which will be manifested in one way or another.

Every movement that starts abruptly is always wrong. It comes from an unconscious reaction in our own life, or from anguish in front of the unknown, that is, the fear of death. One must always allow the "Life principle" to run its course between an action and the decision that precedes it, and thereby allow the normal rhythm of the movements of prakriti to take place. Prakriti will assert its rights and create enough obstacles to strengthen or to cancel the decision before there has been any action.

It is said that thoughts that are a part of prakriti are of a very subtle matter. Because of that, one can learn to control them and no longer to feel one with them. When you are able to direct your thoughts in a more objective manner, it proves that you are already dissociated from them.

Every time you discover that you are dissociated from prakriti, even for an instant, it means that some of the elements of prakriti in you have been liberated. But the secret remains, that if we emerge from an impure prakriti, it is only to enable us to go towards a purer prakriti. This is the way of a *sahaja* discipline¹ lived in the midst of life. The follower of such a discipline works to coordinate his efforts towards that end.

There are two ways to escape from the chain of prakriti, since everything on every plane exists in such a way that

¹ See pp. 3-11.

experiences are endlessly repeated. Both of them are very exacting.

One of the ways is upward and consists in the initiation into *sannyāsa*¹ of the monks who roam about India wearing the ochre or the white robe, or of the layman who resolutely enters, at a particular time in his life, upon the hermit's "cave life" in order to live a spiritual experience.

The other way tends downward. For man and woman alike, it is like the degradation of prostitution: the abandoning of castes and of the social framework. By this movement they deliberately cease to submit to the true Law and put themselves under a lower set of laws.

It is not giving that counts, for giving remains a proof that one has something to give. What counts is to experience the most complete dissatisfaction with oneself and to see it with open eyes until one gets down to bedrock. This is the movement that causes prakriti, uncovered and unmasked, to react.

At this moment something as yet unperceived can begin to break through. It is the energy (*śakti*) that becomes the matrix or the Void. There only can something take shape and be born when the time comes. Bedrock represents the eternal Prakriti busy with ceaseless creation, for such is her function, indifferent to everything taking place around her. This is one of her movements. She has another movement, opposite to it, which must also be discovered. According to one of her Laws, she gradually pushes her children into Purusha's field of vision. Meeting the piercing look of Purusha, whose function it is to "see," is an instant of total understanding, a giving up of oneself. How can one describe that look? What one knows of it cannot be communicated. And besides, it would be useless to try.

All one can do is to wait with much love and be ready to meet it. Is it possible to guess when Prakriti will make this gesture for you? Is it possible to know why she does so?

¹ Complete renunciation of worldly life by way of monastic vows.

It is essential to build one's life around two principles: that of letting go and that of contraction. The moment of complete, conscious "letting go" is when Purusha is in dissociation from Prakriti. Such a moment lasts only as long as several very calm respirations; this creates the naked universe, stripped of the "I". Correctly speaking, this is not meditation, but rather an attitude of interiorized life. Sri Aurobindo lived it for forty years isolated in his ashram¹; Shri Ramana Maharshi lived it during his whole life in his rarely broken silence.

Expansion is the creative movement corresponding to introspection. The one inevitably leads to the other, that is, expansion of itself leads to letting go when one finds the inner point of balance.

A fundamental idea is that of conscious identification with the forces of Nature. Its significance is vast. It means full expansion in complete relaxation. But one cannot actualize anything without first having let go of everything!

What can I do? Faced with this question, the best thing to do is to do nothing on one's own initiative. The idea of expansion has to be properly understood. There can be no expansion except through love. In love we emerge from our little ego. But this love has to be impersonal. I can speak about it by using the Vedic image of the sun, which radiates energy and thereby illuminates and creates. This is the essence of its expansion. It is not attached to anything, yet it attracts everything to it in its kingdom of light. Expansion does not mean doing something; it means being and becoming. The capacity to do flows spontaneously from the capacity to be.

Purusha "is," whereas Prakriti "is" and also "does," but always from the centre outwards, exactly in the way the very delicate green shoots sprout from the germinated seed. This seed in itself is Purusha folded back on itself, motion-

¹ Sri Aurobindo appeared only four times a year before his disciples, on the days known as *darshan*.

less and at the same time the creator of the movement of life. You must know this, and then feel in yourself that you are both Purusha and Prakriti. This is the Samkhya version of expansion.

I often wonder who orchestrates the dangerous games of nations, who it is that in a given year devours the sap of life and in another year gives it fresh vigour. All this is the work of prakriti. How clever she is at creating mountains out of a grain of sand! From afar Purusha watches her at work. He smiles! To tell the truth, prakriti also laughs while pretending to be absorbed in the work on which her heart is set!

The important thing in all of this is to keep calm and to smile while taking everything as it comes up just as seriously as a child would. Then forget it the next minute! There will always be heavy obligations for you to carry, but you can lay them down, one after the other, as you move forward on the road of life.

These obligations are like black clouds accumulating in the sky. When they become heavy enough, they burst of themselves and disperse. In time, obligations disappear by themselves.

The secret is to accept everything, but be very careful not to be attached to anything whatsoever!

LAWS — POWERS

In India people strive for these powers:

- to reach God;
- to make God appear objective;
- to have a clear sensation of the "I";
- to eradicate every difference between "you" and "me" ;
- to materialize the divine Laws and worship them as they are represented in the form of gods.

If man of 50,000 years ago were to return, he would see that man has not changed, either spiritually or in his deep reactions. The whole of civilization is only the outward appearance (*māyā*) of what is manifested (*sat*). So why then should the Hindu believer not look for a means to escape from this slavery?

This cosmos to which we belong does not hold us in slavery. It is what it is. For us it represents the continuity of a power, of a descending Law with, here and there, one ascending soul, one in a million says the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Such a soul radiates its own light; it touches other hearts because it has "passed through the death of the ego and the birth of the being." It is nourished by the Void. In the Void, absurdities evaporate spontaneously.

He who has lost faith and builds it up again slowly and cautiously by means of the science of Samkhya, the logic and mathematics relating to cosmic Laws, knows by experience why the world holds together; but the instant he tries to formulate the mathematical equation, he will fail and fall.

Great Nature in her eternal recurrence represents a form of prakriti that the human heart can comprehend. She expresses the force that has two opposite movements, the one ascending, the other descending. Their role is to bring mankind and organic life on earth into the play of cosmic Laws. She shows the mechanical aspect of the Laws, in which man,

according to his stage of evolution and inner attitude, sees miracles, ironies, or absurdities, or no matter what else, in order to escape the grip of eternal recurrence. At the same time, he refuses to see the harmonious operation of these cosmic Laws.

This concordance is beyond human logic, such logic being only a form of the unconscious and mechanical functioning of the ego.

The world is a bazaar where everybody is shouting at the top of his voice to attract attention and make his little bargain. Remember that success or failure means nothing in the play of the Laws. All depends only on how the game is played. Thoughts are a thousand times more powerful than words. Be quiet in yourself, be calm and silent in the agitation around you. Let the powers act without allowing the human law, subjective and narrow, to interfere. The great powers act by impregnating the nerve fibres of the earth.

The whole of life is the immensity of the darkness of night (*varuṇa*) and the immensity of the light of day (*mitra*). The multiplicity of the circumstances and conditioning, to which we are subject in time, must not distort our inner vision in relation to darkness and light.

Then, in the intermediate light between day and night, we will clearly distinguish the broken lines which are the Laws as they come down to us, insofar as we are able to understand them. The work, for every one of us, is to learn to recognize them steadfastly and patiently, one after another.

Power, even in its most subtle and essential vibrations, includes two directions: one is positive and the other negative. Words such as truth, life, essence, should only be used with caution, for they contain in themselves an implicit source of opposition.

All the Vedic sages (*r̥sis*) repeatedly taught that spiritual life proceeds by jumps, by upward thrusts, whose trajectory, being subject to the Law of gravity, falls down again from

the apogee of its course to the lowest point. This fall is what starts eternal recurrence. We live and are fed by the visions of "those who see", and there will always be new *rsis* and new disciples.

In these times, the *rsi's* vision serves only to create disciples. Disciples are necessary so that what is brought by the *rsi* can make its way into life. But the more the disciples are attached to themselves, the more mediocre they become, interested only in defending their rights of seniority, their ashram, their Master's thought, without engaging themselves in the process of creation.

In summary, the *rsi's* vision does not seem to belong to those who gather around him, but is a testimony to "That which is" for a much wider circle and for the sake of a continuity that will establish itself. This vision is a state of impersonal consciousness; it is what keeps the world in an exact relationship to the Laws. To impose a name on it is to limit the vision and lock it in a closed circle.

There are three important points to recognize in the ascending spiral representing the evolution of man: the point of sunrise, the point of the zenith, and of the "High North" (*uttaram*), which is the summit reached by the trajectory of this ascending spiral. The High North is the point where a new light scale begins to develop.

This direction toward the High North is also directly related to the solstices. The sun travels toward the north from December 21 until June 21 and the days lengthen. From the time when the sun moves toward the south, the days get shorter. That is why Yama, the king of death, is represented as living in the south and Shiva, the god of life and death beyond the north. Moreover, the east is the origin of light, the west is the house of the Void. These indications are scrupulously observed in the building of a temple or of a house. The position north-east always indicates the very action of the Law in our life.

For an action to be in accordance with the Laws and be a part of them, two forces must support it. One of them is

the Void, which generated the action, the other the energy and freedom of its movement.

Such a mode of action is established in a right relationship between Guru and disciple. The Guru says to his disciple, "Go and fulfil this task and know that even here I shall be the Void of your movement. Feel this deeply in yourself." These two forces can also co-exist in the same person, which is the state mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita*: the action is born from the vibration of the Void.

The best illustration of this is the story of a nun chosen by the king of a state to become his queen. The *sannyāsini* finally accepted on condition that she be given an isolated room in the royal palace to which she alone would have the key. She used to go there every day. The king, jealous of the radiance of the queen, decided one day to follow her there to steal her secret. The room he saw her enter was bare and whitewashed. A sackcloth robe was hanging on a nail. The queen took off her rich attire and her jewels and put on this beggar's dress. Then she meditated for a long time, seated on the ground. At last, she turned around and said to the king, "Here I am 'myself,' the woman who loved God alone before she became a queen, and who still loves only God, in His divine play."

That queen has no name. She is part of Indian folklore.

An impulse pushes us to follow the way of the spirit, Purusha. We must not stop to ask: "What is this impulse?" It is there so that we may follow the ideal and constantly make it grow. No backward steps! This impulse has to be cultivated because it belongs to the ascending Law.

Opposing this, prakriti holds us fast in the wheels of her perfect machinery. One can be satisfied there and sleep in peace. Prakriti asks no more of us. She has a very strong power of gravitation, and drags back to herself beings who were ready to escape. She brings them back very skilfully for she needs our lives for her own purposes; she needs humus composed of the constantly renewed heavy and fine

matter which our lives bring to her.

As regards any personal discipline, you must follow the right course. What you get through intuition can never fail you. The whole attitude can be summed up in a short sentence: "I know that, I feel that, I am that." Let the powers work deep within you. The pain that results is that of a new birth. If inclination for inner work lessens, do not worry. Creation starts in darkness. Out of nothing comes the force of *śakti*. Let yourself be carried by the stream; do not struggle. Not that you will reach the shore; your destination is to become the ocean itself.

We know that there are seven planes: three above and three below and a seventh which serves as a bridge. The three lower planes generate the physical, emotional, and mental; the three higher ones generate pure existence (*sat*), pure radiant energy (*cit*), and bliss (*ānānda*), which is the joy of creation; the seventh plane (*rasa*) is that on which things are carried out, that of the mother standing between the father and the child, permeating both.

In the *Tantras* the lunar days are divided into three groups of five. This fivefold pattern symbolizes the power of the Virgin-mother. In each group, the days stand for joy (*nandā*), harmony and welfare (*bhadrā*), victory and power (*jayā*), consecration and sacrifice (*riktā*), plenitude (*pūrṇā*). *Śakti* is pictured as a little girl growing into womanhood. The first stage is her childhood; the second, her adolescence; the third, her youth; the fourth, her maturity; and the fifth, her completeness. Beyond is the Void. The same applies to the three lower planes: physical, emotional, mental. Analytically speaking, beyond *śakti* is the eternal spirit known as *nitya-śoḍaśī*, and still further beyond is complete emptiness, *nirvāna-kāla*.

The full moon symbolizes the blossoming and fruition of the hidden moon's creative activity working in darkness. This is why peasants who are in contact with the earth sow seeds for flowers during the bright phase of the moon and for edible plants in its dark phase. The dark ray of creation

is spoken of in the *Katha Upanishad*.¹

Following is the scheme of the seven planes:

<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>	(the bridge)	<u>Child</u>
1, 2, 3	4		5, 6, 7

There is always a gap, a no-man's-land, between two planes. Otherwise there could be no creation. The Buddhists were right in saying that "everything" comes from "nothing."

The intrinsic qualities (*gunas*) of prakriti are what bring gradual degrees of modification in the transition from matter to spirit and vice versa. These modifications are everywhere and on all planes. Energy (*rajas*) is the element of fermentation. The *Bhagavatam*² gives an excellent comparison between the entire process and a piece of wood catching fire. At first there is no fire — a state of inertia (*tamas*); then comes smoke — a state of energy (*rajas*); and then heat and light — the rarefied state (*sattva*). So whenever we try to break up inertia on the human plane, we must be ready for confusion, misunderstanding and rashness; these things are bound to happen. The whole world is *rajas*, storm and stress, otherwise matter could not become "luminous spirit," or "harmonious multiplicity" like the petals of the lotus, which is the symbol of the One.

Dissolution is often necessary before real creation starts. You cannot always be looking for something. You must stop somewhere and let things grow within you. There is a rhythm of creation and a rhythm of dissolution, symbolized by the dance of Shiva. At first this dance is violent, full of convulsive movements with steps marking life and death at the same time. The *ṛsis* have called this part of the dance *tāṇḍava*. Its duration is related to cycles. Gradually the dance changes into the gentle dance of balanced force, where the rhythm becomes so supple that life and death are near each other and can be felt in the same movement. The *ṛsis*

¹ 2.2.15.

² 1.2.24.

have called this rhythmic vibration *lāsyā*.

Herein lies the true creative possibility of *śakti*, of which the violent *tāṇḍava* of Shiva is the cosmic background. The balance and deep significance of life lie in dissolution. This is what makes life a constant renewal. Accept things just as they come and one day the light step of *lāsyā* will be yours.

There are two movements in creation. The movement of interiorization always precedes that of exteriorization. It is represented in the following imagery: according to the *Puranas*, creation was to come from the four united principles, the four sons of Brahma.¹ But when Brahma had created them, instead of going down to earth and manifesting themselves outwardly, they went back into their father's bosom and became the force of withdrawal, from which there then issued the "Seven Sages" or "Seven Laws" that participated in the creation and continue to maintain it. These two movements, interiorization and exteriorization, are to be found everywhere, in creation as in de-creation, or *pralaya*, that is to say, the creation that undoes itself spontaneously, beginning from the end. Creation is in itself birth and death, whereas de-creation is in itself death and birth.

It is difficult to conceive of the transition from rarefaction to density even though it is the very process of all creation. We realize, or rather we imagine, what the Void may be, but to follow the process of the ether becoming the earth, which would be the genuine realization of creation, is far from our understanding.

You rise to the heights and are often aware of the process, but then you suddenly bump your head on the earth. Of course, you bring the flavour of the ether down with you but still you cannot re-create it. The attempt has been given up as almost impossible by the author of the *Brahmasutra* who remarked: "You can become one with Brahma in knowledge and bliss, but you cannot become one with him in his creative power." The explanation is something like this: you can die consciously, but you cannot be born con-

¹ The god of the Hindu trinity in his creative aspect.

sciously. If you could do so, your birth would be a divine birth, an incarnation.

Through the ages man has pursued his quest beyond death through idolatry. Even nowadays man's search starts with idolatry and it is very important to see that it ends with it, too. If matter becomes spirit, spirit likewise must return to matter. That is why the greatest spiritual Masters of India never denounced or gave up idolatry. Not even Shankaracharya.

Through his Guru's teaching, the Hindu disciple discovers, in the spiritual discipline he follows, how to put into daily practice the Laws of Shiva Mahadeva, the supreme Lord, just as they are described in all the sacred texts. These Laws are illustrated by three aspects of life, creation, preservation and destruction, and by two movements, the one from above moving downward, the other from below going upward.

A disciple will hold to this imagery so long as he expects to receive everything from his Guru. He may continue to do so during several successive lives, unless the idea of evolution is born in him. There comes a time when the disciple recognizes the obstacles that he must face and go beyond. He discovers that this has to do with the Law of three in his own nature and in his development.

Three Laws govern life: the Law of growth, the Law of expansion, and the Law of intensity. All three are illustrated by the "tree of life", showing how this tree grows, how it spreads out its foliage, and how it sinks its roots deep into the soil.

One must be firmly rooted. Such is the first Law. Then grow and assert yourself. At that moment open yourself, stretch out your arms to feel your radiation around you, and then bring the universe back to you with your head held high, for it touches the sun. Be deep, wide, tall, truly like a tree of life.

Śakti, insofar as it is the power of matter utilized by

Purusha in its manifestation, still depends on Purusha. It is by nature opposed to Purusha, so that between the two a life-giving current may be established. As soon as *śakti* appears, it already contains in itself the three initial Laws which give it its material density.

If Purusha chooses to play an active role, its *śakti* will always be passive. On the other hand, if Purusha chooses to be passive, its *śakti* will always be active. While the passive element stands back, the active element takes different forms. Each form or each movement gives rise to new Laws which, if the movement ceases, will be reenfolded within one another and will return to the initial force that gave them birth.

Thus in Shivaism, Shiva, representing the spirit, is always passive, and his *śaktis*, representing various aspects of manifestation in the world, have different functions under different names: Uma, Gauri, Annapurna, Parvati, Kali, Durga, and so forth. In Vaishnavism, on the other hand, Vishnu is the active element. He is the creator who has manifested himself in different forms in different incarnations,¹ displaying a gradual voluntary evolution. The constant activity of Vishnu is to maintain the world, whereas his *śakti* is secret, inner and completely passive. She is called Shri, meaning beauty and harmony. She is the symbol of the lotus in full bloom. Shri is the secret in the heart of a woman.

The sound (*bīja*) in the sacred word (*mantra*) is the vibration which causes matter to pass to spirit, or conversely, spirit to pass to matter. Hence its great importance in spiritual techniques. Every being has his own vibration which, in either a clear or confused way, is equivalent to a formula of coagulation or of a possible dissolution. On the horizontal plane, in ordinary life, this mantric vibration is expressed by a configuration (*yantra*) which is the basic individual diagram used by the force emanating from oneself at no matter what degree of materialization.

¹ There are ten incarnations of Vishnu (*Bhagavatapurana*, Bk. I, Chap. 3).

This force flows out in complete disorder. It is instinctive. It obeys all the outer attractions and associates itself with all the automatic movements of prakriti, whatever they may be. Those who are conscious of the power of this spontaneous force direct their effort towards preventing its uncontrolled emanation and towards canalizing it without producing any mutilation.

Then one must learn to know it, to guide it, to love it as it is, so as to tame it and give it a way of expression. The sacred sound (*bija*) is that very force which, when necessary, is used against itself. This has nothing to do with the invocations or sacred words (*mantras*) which are repeated to create a state of openness or surrender; but only with the seed-syllable itself.

There are four Tantric Laws that concern Unity:

1. Cosmic unity (*brahmāṇḍa*), which is, in the expansion of the self up to touching the sky, a passionate love for the sensory universe in all its forms, until it brings within ourselves the vibration of the Vedic formula: "The earth is my mother, I am the child of the earth."

2. The psychic unity (*prakṛtyāṇḍa*) existing between the real inner being and the ego with all its impulses. This unity is the thread of life connecting all experiences lived through up until our discovery of knowledge.

3. Causal unity (*māyāṇḍa*), which is the progressive discovery of the forces and Laws within the heart of Prakriti.

4. Spiritual unity (*śaktyāṇḍa*), which is the harmonious association of our soul, our essence, the "I," and the force of life, the most subtle Prakriti.

There is a basic rule for approaching any one of these Tantric Laws, which is to understand that the body is the instrument of life. It follows that any stiffening or hardening, that is, any tension in thought or in body, prevents a conscious extension towards the infinite.

Now, as regards the spiritual quest: if you consciously hold within yourself three-quarters of your power and use

only one-quarter to respond to any communication coming from others, you can stop the automatic, rapid, and thoughtless movement outward, which leaves you with a feeling of emptiness, of having been absorbed by life. This stopping of the movement outwards is not self-defence, but rather an effort to have the response given come from within, from the deepest part of one's being. This process reverses the natural movement of prakriti and brings back energy to its seed form. Let this become your way of communicating with others.

Something in yourself is awakened, and by this interiorization you begin a movement in the direction opposite from what is taking place outwardly. Thereby two movements are produced in you. One of them goes outward and the other goes inward. The latter is the movement of the higher Prakriti uniting with the immobile Purusha. This is the moment in which prakriti surrenders, in which there is no struggle.

The Law of life is the same. As the physical cells build the body, the germ cells are concentrated within and retain their energy for a later creation. We imagine that we create by projecting outwards, whereas real creation takes place through suction and absorption. When this power of absorption becomes natural, you discover that creation, radiation, communication and all similar processes come to you spontaneously.

In Samkhya, this spontaneous creation is called *dharma-megha*, or the cloud of energy that pours forth multiple powers, for behind this creation there is the Void.

All spiritual search is directed towards a shining point, which can be approached only from the periphery of a big circle and in many different ways. Samkhya is the logical science that makes it possible to see the movements of prakriti and to dissociate oneself from it on the plane of life itself. This is the opposite of the attitude of so many seekers who, in order to escape from the clutches of prakriti and turn away from it, run away from the world to follow a primitive

discipline that mutilates their life to such an extent that it no longer has any connection with reality.

Feeling oneself dissociated from prakriti does not mean that one has become her master. To master prakriti requires inner work and attentive observation of *śakti*'s energy. This energy is a fully awakened power which is not yet tamed. Only when prakriti is conquered and mastered does Life within life, in the midst of all prakriti's erratic movements, become the state described as Shiva-*śakti* in the heart of the cosmic Laws.

The whole theory of the Void is that of the luminous ether (*ākāśa*). Sound (*śabda*) and speech (*vāk*) come from *ākāśa*, and therefore also the idea of a creator God who in order to manifest Himself, uses five elements and five sensations.

The five elements belong to God, to the descending Law; the five sensations belong to man, to the ascending Law. To approach a direct experience, we have only the authority of the Sacred Scriptures and the experiences of the saints and *yogis* who have gone before us. The work of transformation in the course of evolution can only be done by oneself on oneself. A Master, of course, can activate it, and fellow disciples can help in sustaining the effort, but the seeker will be entirely alone throughout his attempt and many times he will confuse the means with the end to be attained.

Some notions are occasionally given but always in a veiled form which can be interpreted in different ways, such as:

“One must be subtle enough to feel the presence of the mother, for life begins with an odour....

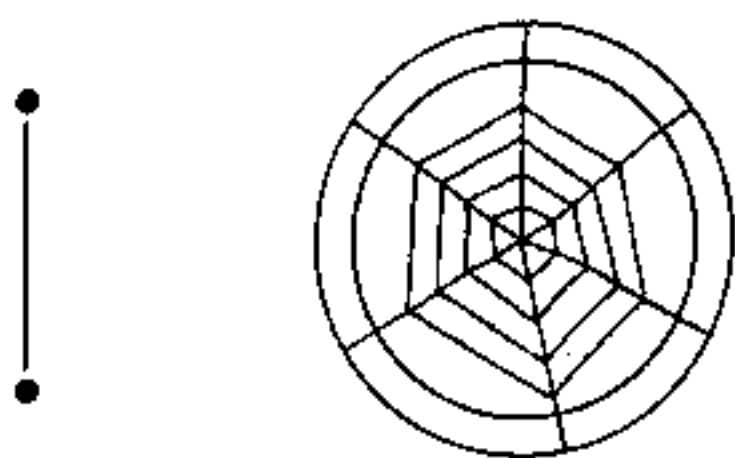
“One must be subtle enough to discover where the father is, for life ends with a sound....”

In studying the *Tantras*, one discovers progressively, thanks to sound and by means of sound, how the idea, by

taking on density, gradually becomes the object that is perceived. The two linked words "Shiva-śakti" create the vibration by which the spirit takes on the density of matter. Every time this double word is pronounced one must refer also to what it contains in the ascending Law, for it is the passage from one level to the next. In every sensation pertaining to the ascending Law, each movement begins with heat, continues with the materiality of food and light, and reaches luminous ether, that is, the Void.

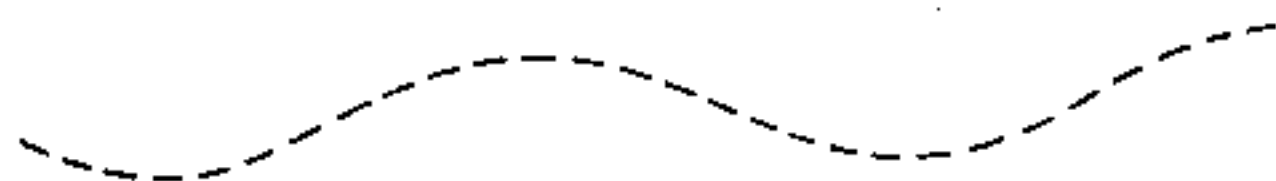
The three Laws of *śakti* always remain veiled. They are the Laws of pure Existence (*sat*), of pure Spirit (*cit*) and pure Bliss (*ānanda*). Another Law, however, the Law of phenomena, is projected on to the screen of consciousness.

The first of the three Laws is that of pure Existence, *sat*; although having the appearance of complete immobility it is in itself a vibration or a movement. This inner vibration is the source of all existing movement. The first movement is a straight line between two points and it is this straight line that represents the immobility of Shiva. Prakriti appears and takes possession of the pattern of straight lines, weaving onto it her pattern in the shape of a spider's web, with broken lines forming angles, surrounded by concentric circles.



Finally, by the force of *śakti* these curves detach themselves from the horizontal plane to form a spiral ascending around its own axis.

The second Law is that of pure Bliss. *Ānanda* is the result of the movement having taken place in consciousness, a calm movement like an undulation of the water. This undulation contains life, which is in itself the very essence of *śakti*. This pattern of flexible undulation is nevertheless made up of short broken lines.



The third Law is that of pure Spirit. *Cit* has a very definite function between the vibration originating in the immobile source and the wave that is the essence of *śakti*. It is the awakened consciousness and its role is to unite *sat* with *ānanda*.

In one way or another, it can be said of *sat* that if I look within myself, I see that *śakti* draws me inwardly. I become conscious of the immobility of the world and of the straight line between two points representing Purusha. Of *ānanda* it can be said that if I am conscious of what is around me, I project myself outward and enter into the very play of *śakti*. At that moment I feel all the waves passing over the water as being the pulsations of life itself. On the other hand, *cit*, the pure consciousness of the spirit, observes what is happening between *sat* and *ānanda*.

The expression Shiva-*śakti* reveals the ultimate reality beyond the concept Purusha-Prakriti of classical Samkhya. Shiva-*śakti* is the state of the fully realized being, that is, an inward state of enlightened consciousness. The seeker who has not yet dissociated himself from the prakriti outside himself and from the prakriti within himself, sees the immobile Purusha as a state of pure consciousness and prakriti as being an unconscious and mechanical force.

Prakriti and Shakti thus denote two different states of consciousness, the second being a higher state of conscious-

ness tending towards the limitless. Prakriti is a kinetic energy, whereas śakti is a latent potential energy returning to itself and containing in itself all the possibilities of development of prakriti's movements.

If I speak to you, I am using prakriti's power of exteriorization. If I collect in myself what I wish to say to you, I have the choice of speaking if I so desire or of saying nothing, thus demonstrating the interiorized power of śakti, which contains in itself the kinetic capacity of prakriti.

The inner fluctuations and commotions in the course of spiritual discipline (*sādhana*) can be expressed schematically, according to the modifications in the passive and active qualities involved.

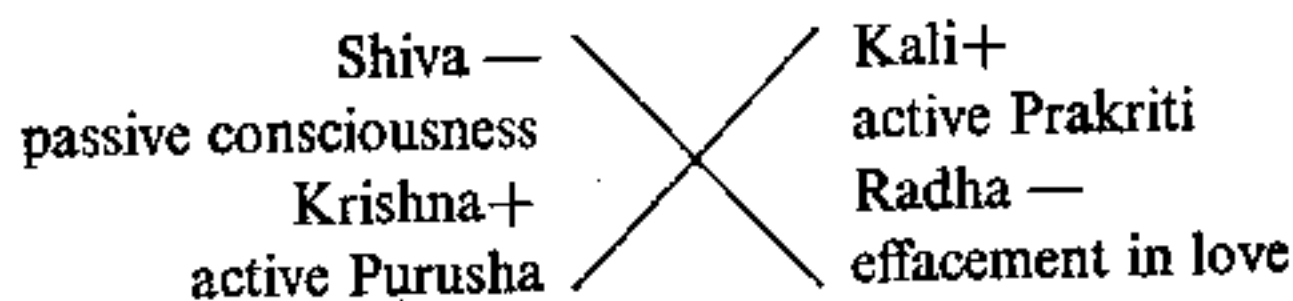
The lower aspect or exteriorization	prakriti-Purusha
	+ —
The higher aspect or interiorisation	Shiva-śakti
	— +

From the point of view of Samkhya, Prakriti can be an active energy only if it has a passive substratum opposing its movement. This fact is represented mythologically by Kali (time) dancing on the naked body of Shiva (infinity). From the psychological viewpoint, consciousness is the surface of a mirror across which reflections of movement pass rapidly. Consciousness remains immobile.

In the mystical experience it is known that Prakriti in movement and immobile Purusha are but one. Here the *Vaishnavite Tantras* bring a clarifying element to Samkhya by saying that the visible movement in Prakriti is Purusha's movement permeating it. The two are no longer dissociated. Spiritualized Prakriti is nothing more than the form of Purusha. Mystically, this gives us the following scheme:

Prakriti-Purusha	the two movements of existence having become one.
Krishna-Radha	the mystical couple par excellence.

Krishna, as Purusha, is fully conscious in the midst of his activity. Radha, in her transcendental love for Krishna, is in ecstasy (*samādhi*) even in her role of prakriti. Psychologically, according to Vaishnavite Tantrism, Radha, through her passivity, becomes the substratum of the activity of Krishna-Purusha. The roles are thus reversed, producing the following diagram:



Shiva-Radha are *nirguṇa*

the transcendental aspect of existence and power

Kali-Krishna are *saguṇa*

the phenomenal aspect of existence and power.

That is why, in India, so many children are named Kali-Krishna.

The Tantric scriptures reveal the necessary deviations making it possible for creation to escape from the ceaseless mechanical repetitions of prakriti.

If there were no deviations, one could easily imagine creation taking place without discontinuity between the immobile Purusha and Prakriti manifested in its numerous aspects. But the primordial energy of *śakti* constantly produces deviations, both in the subtle densities of the spirit and in the coarse densities of matter. Once set in motion, this process cannot stop. Therein lies the whole chance of creation towards a possible evolution, and man's opportunity to move upwards, provided that the deviation by broken lines turns upwards in a spiral (*kundalīnī*). The amplitude of their curve can be very wide without change of direction.

The curve of deviation can also be repeatedly retraced on the horizontal plane, attracted by its point of departure.

In that case, because of the endless repetitions that will take place, the primordial energy will be frittered away and finally lost.

The figure "3" represents the "Law of three," which contains in itself the whole of life. In the beginning, there was the One, Purusha. From its inner vibration, the One projected its opposite, as light casts a shadow, which is its substratum. In this movement, spirit-matter, bound by the energy which belongs equally to the one and the other, can become perceptible. This can be demonstrated in the following manner:

One is the 'I'-subject manifested by light — *sattva*

Two is the 'I'-object manifested by shadow — *tamas*

Between the two aspects of I-subject and I-object the perpetual movement of life develops, that is, all forms of manifestation on the lower plane of life. This perpetual movement of energy is *rajas*.

Thus life, through the energy of *rajas*, is a development of movements acting between the two poles of *sattva-tamas*. From the plane of *rajas*, which is ours, a certain state of consciousness can exist in which it is possible to perceive what is above (*sattva*) and what is below (*tamas*).

What is above can be known by sudden intuition or glimpsed through imagination, but it is impossible to reach it without a shock provoked by the vision itself. A thorough discipline of the mind is the indispensable preparation for this.

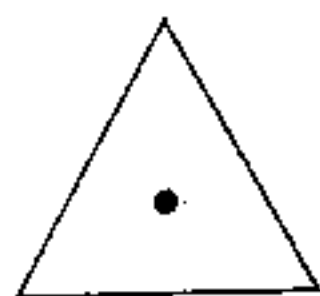
What is below is the weight of ignorance, the inertia of the primitive prakriti. It is also the field of individual work. Before discovering the stages leading towards *sattva*, one must become familiar with the opposition of heavy matter.

The energy of *rajas* proceeds from *śakti*, which holds sway in the space between *sattva* and *tamas*. The energy of *rajas* is the desire that creates life. Without this desire, that space would be the Void without movement or action. Ac-

tually, life exists only through a deviation of energy, through a propulsion which sooner or later returns to its starting-point.

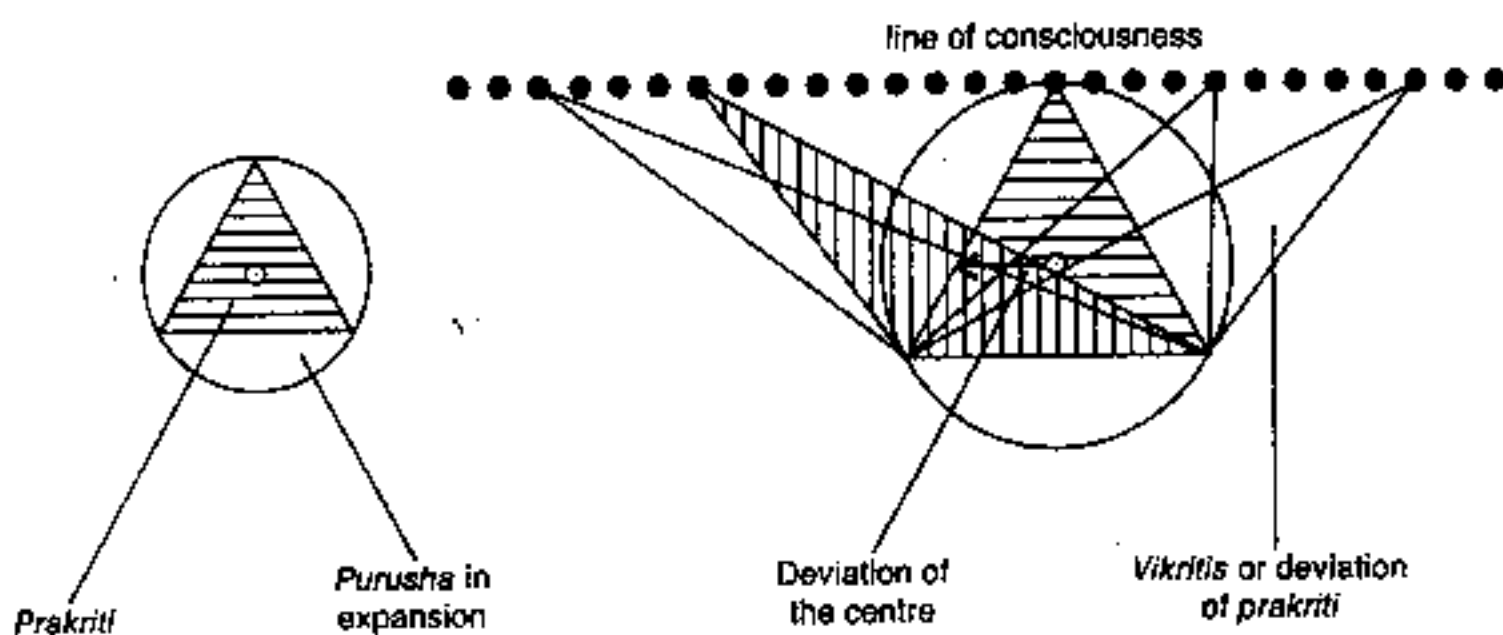
This movement of exteriorization and of interiorization seems to vary in its possibility of extension according to one's understanding of it. In fact, one is in front of a point ● (*bindu*) which contains everything in itself. When energy creates a movement, this point becomes a straight line. To return to its starting-point, a deviation is a necessity. The straight line will break and, through broken lines forming angles, will return to its starting-point.

Three angles are necessary for a movement to enclose a space and thereby create a surface, a form. This form is a triangle. Every action can be described as a triangle. If the angles are equal, the action is perfect and balanced. The three lines are the qualities of prakriti (*guṇas*) and the space is that of śakti spread out and in balance. Śakti can also gather itself together at the central point (*bindu*), which signifies, in a perfect action or in a perfect meditative state — the union of śakti and Purusha, a state of perfect awakened consciousness.



But life is full of distorted and falsified actions, that is, of triangles with unequal angles in which the central point has been displaced in relation to the centre of the perfect triangle. The deviations are caused by unconscious subjectivity, by the desires and greediness of the individual prakriti. Innumerable triangles can be formed on the base (*tamas*) of the triangle, which are projected up to the line of consciousness. This line is not continuous; it is made up of an infinity of points that represent short moments of consciousness.

The following diagrams serve as illustrations:



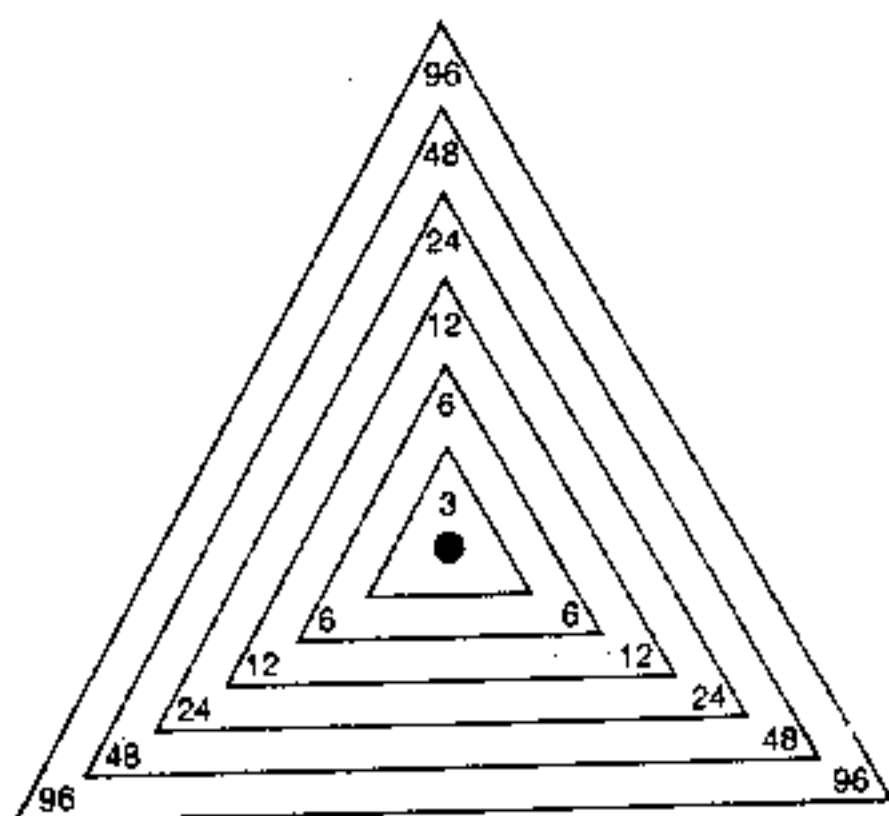
While following a spiritual discipline a man tries, at a certain time, by interiorization during active meditation, to feel in himself the mobile qualities and tendencies of the inner being. It means coming into contact with the world in which his own Law of three functions. On our level of understanding we can perceive the triangle of our life formed by the three *guṇas* and the numerous irregular triangles formed by our actions.

The subdivision and expansion of the three *guṇas* (*tamas-rajās-sattva*) in relation to the three fundamental intrinsic qualities of the primordial prakriti make up different worlds in accordance with the relative distance of these worlds from one another. The greater the subdivision of the *guṇas*, the greater is the subdivision of the Law of three. A seeker can never have access to any world higher than his own unless he has completely absorbed in himself the *guṇas* of his own world to the point of being one with them. This means that his inner equilibrium is then brought into accord with his prakriti.

In the following diagrams, the figures indicate the number of *guṇas* in each world. From one world to the next, the number is multiplied by two, whether the worlds are taken as in the cosmic order or as worlds interiorized in man. The number represents the subdivision of the Law of three which becomes heavier the further it moves from the primordial prakriti. Three *guṇas* are added in each world to

the sum of *guṇas* from the preceding world.

$\triangle 3$	3 <i>guṇas</i> of primordial prakṛiti.
$\triangle 6$	$3+3 \rightarrow 6+3 \rightarrow 9$
$\triangle 12$	$9+3 \rightarrow 12+9 \rightarrow 21$
$\triangle 24$	$21+3 \rightarrow 24+21 \rightarrow 45$
$\triangle 48$	$45+3 \rightarrow 48+45 \rightarrow 93$
$\triangle 96$	$93+3 \rightarrow 96+93 \rightarrow 189$
$\triangle 192$	$189+3 \rightarrow 192 \dots$



The triangle shows how three broken lines enclose a surface. This surface has two dimensions, but there is a third dimension to be attained, in conformity with a Vedic Law indicating three successive stages. They follow one another in the manner indicated below:

1. The stage when the potter's wheel sets up a circular movement.

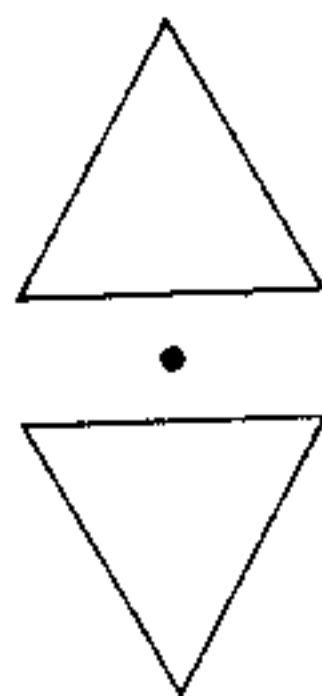
2. The stage when the clay placed on the wheel becomes malleable; the circular movement can then give a form to the clay, but it still remains on the same level.

3. The stage when a spindle is fixed on the wheel. The clay at once comes up in a spiral. The hub will even reach a point slightly higher than the spindle-axis.

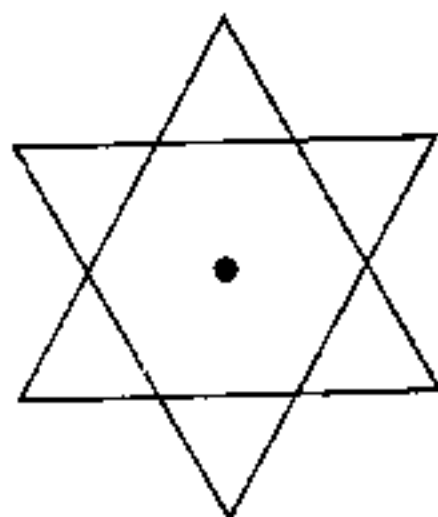
This movement explains why there are moments of pro-

gression in life and moments of regression, and time which elapses between these different movements. In spiritual experience, every man ought to aspire to raise himself around an axis, and every woman to become a perfect triangle in order to create perfect forms.

In the following diagram the seeker stands between two triangles. He who devotes his life to spiritual search, thanks to his inner discipline, absorbs the *śakti* of the triangle of the infinite ideal which is above him. Below him the downward pointing triangle contains all possible forms of manifestation.



Perfect *yoga* in the heart of life is represented by the two integrated triangles with a single centre. A Master is one who voluntarily enters into the manifested prakriti. His disciples and pupils are so many reflections of himself which he recognizes without being attached to them. He stands in the centre of the two triangles.



As regards the symbol of the triangle, one should know that Tantric esotericism represents *śakti* as the water chestnut (*śṛṅgātaka*), a peculiar pyramid-shaped fruit growing in swamps. There again you have the idea of density.

The radiation of energy has two movements, one of them centripetal and the other centrifugal. The interaction of these two movements produces the luminous sphere of all existence, technically known as *bindu*, the point which is situated in the centre of the pyramid. Creation may appear and start from any point, going either from the centre outward, or from the periphery toward the centre. *Śakti* never stops creating, whether she spreads herself out or concentrates herself within. In fact, these movements are complementary to one another, just as are the phenomena of denseness and rarefaction.

What we need is to break the inertia that hinders or slows the passage from one state to another. I use the word *tapasyā* in speaking of this movement, and the instantaneous power of transformation in this passage, whether it be centripetal or centrifugal.

The *Vedas* tell us that we have a "Father in Heaven" and a "Mother on Earth." They are linked together by the atmosphere full of clouds, full of quarrels between the gods and quarrels between the demons, full of book knowledge and all the philosophies of life. The *śāstras* and the *puranas* bind us with chains called spirituality, orthodoxy, politics, castes and economic conditions.

What does man possess that could eventually free him? As often as not he is unaware of it, for prakṛiti jealously holds him under her sway. And yet most of his instinctive movements are right. His original, very primitive nature can serve him in his thought as in his feelings. And this is his chance, for he will gradually discover in himself a higher spiritual force which will lead him to worship the divine Mother in one or another of her aspects, and an animal force through which he will identify himself with one of the divine

Mother's vehicles: tiger, cat, swan, peacock, etc.

The cosmic Laws act on the level of our understanding, but we are able to perceive only a very few of them. As a result, we can adapt the conditions of our life only to those Laws we have recognized. The cosmic Laws operate in time. And the notion of time, beyond our limitations, is unknown to us. What consciousness of time do people in India have? This concept is difficult to understand until you integrate it within yourself.

The *Tantras* indicate a method to realize the zero value of time. Technically, this value is called *bindu*. It is said that the pronunciation of a sacred formula (*mantra*) takes three *moras* and a half. The half is the point (*bindu*) which contains the all and is attained by drawing in the consciousness through seven stages, each stage in a geometric progression with different intervals: $1/2 + (1/4... 1/8... 1/16... 1/32... 1/64... 1/128... 1/256) ...$ of a *mora*.

In reality, this is the alternating movement of consciousness in an inner concentration lasting as long as the recitation of the *japa* (sacred formulas) until one comes in contact with the Void. This *bindu*, more subtle than the atom, and Brahman, "the Vaster than the vast," are the same. Both are the Void. Time moves between the two. Between the two, there are the coils of manifestation like the coils of the serpent which represents the innate force (*śakti*). This innate force, also called *kundalini*, is the operative force between the two modes of the Void.



MASTERS AND DISCIPLES

The disciples, in no matter what ashram, are not attracted primarily by pure metaphysical research, but by the person and the radiance of the Guru, who becomes for them the beacon-light on the path, the ideal made real. Thus the rule of "loyalty to the Guru" immediately comes into play. The Guru's authority (*Gurudom*) is boundless.

Traditionally, without even being expressed, the Guru's promise to his disciples is as follows: "I am here to lead you toward liberation. Do my work obediently and you will be saved. You will know the highest ecstasy and will be freed from the round of births and deaths (*samsāra*). If I go to heaven, you will come to heaven with me; if I go to hell, you will come to hell with me...."

The Guru's responsibility is immense; he takes upon himself the *karma* of all those he accepts. For their part, the disciples are happy to throw their burden on his shoulders. Is the Master great enough to wish that one of his disciples will one day be more renowned than himself? If he does not wish it, a descending Law immediately operates. Owing to the Guru's hold over his disciple, there is often something morbid in their relationship, like that of father to son when the son is doomed to remain a son without ever becoming a father.

In the preliminary part of the Samkhya discipline, the disciple's relationship to the Guru is compared to a seed that has been buried in the earth. The seed is left to develop by itself in the heart of what feeds it. It absorbs the Guru. It will become a plant, bearing foliage, flowers, fruit and seeds. In so doing, it transcends the ground in which it grew and becomes directly responsible for its relation with Great Nature and for the life it contains in itself.

An attitude particularly conducive to rapid progress is

that of total obedience to the Guru in all things: thoughts, attitudes and actions. The aim is to become the well-tilled ground the Master needs. From tradition, everyone knows that with rare exceptions this field, ploughed with such care, will only be used in a future life when the right impulse will take possession of it. This slow and deep preparation is most important.

Great is the illusion of the man who believes that he can reach the goal after a few months of efforts! His ambition will be stopped at precisely the point where he becomes conscious of his personal destination (*svadharma*), of his own law as it seeks its own way in the midst of cosmic Laws. This is equivalent to discovering the Divine that lives in the heart, to serve it, to worship it but nothing more. A wild rosebush can be forced to produce big flowers of its kind, but a wild rosebush will never be able to produce anything but wild roses; any grafting promised by a Guru would mean that he is an impostor. And pseudo-Gurus are legion! This moment of self-knowledge is crucial. It means the death of the illusory ideal and often brings violent reactions. But if the ideal becomes interiorized, that moment of consciousness will be a feeling of unity on the level of the understanding attained. Here we are in the very heart of the living power.

At the beginning, a Guru and his disciple are like a mother and child, joined together by the umbilical cord. There is no tension whatsoever in this attachment. If there were any, it would mean that the "psychic being," which is to grow and develop between them until it becomes the "heat" of their blood, would never take shape for lack of necessary substances.

This psychic being must be nourished with care. It is both cause and effect, meaning that it exists out of time. That is the reason why there is no longer any "why" or "how" in a well established relationship between Guru and disciple. Master and disciple can each say to the other: "I am you...." The same vibration animates them. One day, the "child" between them will disappear, when certain vibra-

tions mathematically reach a known point of reabsorption. Then, life in its reality becomes the Guru.

There are four kinds of devotees:

1. He who becomes a devotee because he is in danger.
2. He who wants to obtain grace, help, health, security from the Master, or simply to live close to him, for his own sake.
3. He who has a thirst for knowledge. In such a case, the Master's physical person and way of life are of little importance to him.
4. He who *knows* without being aware of it, who by nature is good soil. Such a devotee welcomes obstacles on his path because they increase his determination. He has his own roots. For him, what matters is to live an experience, no matter how difficult.

Does a Master care for this last kind of devotee? The situation is illustrated by the story of Lord Narayan, who one day was resting after having stationed two faithful guardians at his door, Jaya (victory) and Vijaya (total victory), to drive off intruders. Two *rishis* arrive from afar and ask to see Narayan. A violent quarrel breaks out at the door of the god, so much so that the *rishis* curse the two guardians. Awakened by the noise, Lord Narayan appears, bowing to the *rishis*; at the same time he is also greatly upset, for nothing can erase the curse the *rishis* have called down. It must take effect. So Narayan says to his two guardians, "Since you have been cursed, you must enter the round of births and deaths, but I can allow you to choose your fate. Do you wish to be born among my devotees or among my enemies?"

"What will be the difference?" ask Jaya and Vijaya.

"If you are among my devotees, it will take you seven lives to reach me; if you are among my enemies, it will only take you three!"

And so it happened that Jaya and Vijaya willingly became great enemies of Narayan, constantly aware of their hate and therefore constantly remembering the god in spite of the severe obstacles they had to overcome to draw near him.

The relationship between Master and disciple is established by an infallible Law, with a view to the esoteric transmission of the cosmic Laws and their functioning. Once this relationship is clearly established, one can neither break out of it nor make decisions for oneself, nor wish to sidestep the Law once it has been recognized and one's part in it discovered. That would only be mental self-deception.

In this connection what is most difficult to attain is the surrender of the mind, because for some time, until a real new birth takes place on a different plane, this surrender seems to be a state of alarming torpor. To accept this state of passivity is always painful.

During all this period the subjective attachment of the disciple to the Guru exists in contrast to the objective love of the Guru for his disciple. What the Master can transmit is neither an idea nor a form, but a means. The *Kaushitaki Upanishad*¹ describes the traditional way in which the dying "father" passes on his power to his "son".

It can be interpreted as the passing on of power from the Guru to his disciple: "Let me place within you my word, my breath, and my vision; what I perceive, what I taste, likewise my actions, pains and pleasures; the concepts to which I have been attached, and my search itself. In you I place my spirit and my consciousness. I give you the breath of my life (*prāṇa*). May power, sanctity and honours go with you" The son or disciple answers, "May your words be fulfilled.... Go in peace!"

In the life of the Buddha, this moment is the one when he set the wheel of the Law in motion within those around him, saying, "Go, and speak of the Law for the benefit of many. When the soil is well tilled sow one seed of knowledge in it, nothing else, and go on further."

Every Guru has only a very few key ideas at the root of his teaching. These ideas are the very ones that brought him to his realization. No others. He will constantly bring his teaching back to the fruits of his personal effort, which

¹ 2.15.

keep his spiritual experience alive.

Some Masters try to express these ideas by a single key word, others dilute them with explicit formulations in order to pass them on to a larger number of disciples. So there are two methods, that of interiorization and that of exteriorization, which the orthodox Hindu recognizes at once. Both of them are traditional. Both of them demand total sacrifice and cost dearly.

No Master transmits the totality of what he has received. As soon as he feels in accordance with the Laws known to him, he utilizes them like chemical formulae, transmitting only fragments to those around him. On the other hand, no fragment of knowledge is ever transmitted before the disciple has perceived it or had a foretaste of it. In summary, the Master is nothing other than an indispensable intermediary between the Laws and those who are ready to discover them. Nor does he ever teach more than a tenth of what he knows. Likewise, air is only a tenth part of ether, and water only a tenth part of air, and so forth. It cannot be otherwise. The Master cannot allow his strength to be further utilized. This explains why there is such a rapid degradation between the level of the Guru and that of the third generation of his disciples. A well-known cosmic Law comes into play here.

What is important to the Master, after having consciously reached the zenith of his upward curve, is to see the downward curve with equal consciousness and to choose the point from which he will teach. This point will keep constantly moving in response to his own living search.

Every saint or Guru speaks according to a particular "principle," adopted and faithfully served, in which lives a hidden Truth. The Guru is perfectly aware of this. This fragment of Truth belonging to ultimate reality is the only thing of real value, whereas the principle in itself, on the human level, merely helps to create the strict form of a discipline.

Certain sacred formulas (*mantras*) have been revealed and many commentaries written. Their form is known, even

to the number of vibrations in each letter. But only the Guru knows their *bījas*, which are his potent semen or seed. He never reveals them. Were he to do so, he himself would become like an empty vessel. Whether the death of the Guru occurs after he has passed on his seed or after he has let it be reabsorbed in himself is of no importance, for the disciple who is a Master by nature will have found by himself the exact resonance of the *bījas* in his Guru's *mantra*.

In the *Tantras*, the *mantra* has four forms:

1. It is given in a detailed form as in a hymn (*stotra*).
2. It is condensed into one formula (*mālā*).
3. This formula is condensed into a single word (*nāma*).
4. This word becomes only a pure sound (*bīja*).

The mind must be led from the hymn to the *bīja*, which is the seed, the pure vibration that gives birth to the psychic body of the disciple.

There are great Masters and small Masters. Both of them do exactly the same work, for great Masters are for great disciples and small Masters for small disciples. The relationship between Master and disciple is the same in both cases.

The disciples, because of their avidity and competitive spirit, are always anxious to discover the sources from which their Master has drawn his knowledge. Some of them ask questions, discuss and argue; others even demand proof. And what do they find? Nothing worthwhile, for the Master transmits what has become his own substance. It is through this substance that the disciple will taste what he is able to assimilate of any given Law.

No matter what stage he has reached, a disciple must learn not to talk about what he has received. All experiences, spectacular and fleeting, are no more than the vision of the level he is trying to reach. To believe in them and talk about them is a pure illusion of the ego. Because of this, a period of silence after each experience is a wise measure of protection.

Sometimes, faced with a difficulty of understanding, the disciple blames this on his Guru and goes away; he is driven downward without being aware of it, caught by the Law of gravity. And so he becomes a parasite in the spiritual search, fed by his ego.

Every great Guru, when the time comes, drives away, from himself and from those close to him, the disciple to whom over a long period he has given a great deal. He releases him from all bonds, blesses him and entrusts him with a special task to fulfil, for "there cannot be two tigers in the same forest."

The disciple who is called upon to leave is fundamentally different from the disciples who live under the direct inspiration of the Master. He takes away with him a seed to be sown where he goes. He leaves without anyone knowing it, after he has secretly received from the Master the "gift of power" which will be his support in life.

This is the origin of the tradition of wandering. The one who goes away changes his name. His trace is lost. No one asks about him. On the lower vital plane, the wild-cat, when the right time comes, drives her kittens away from her. At the risk of their lives, they must find their own living space and hunting ground.

The disciple who leaves possesses nothing except the fact of his belonging to the Laws, for he has been fed by the Guru's essence. Either he will grow and develop with fresh vigour, because of the very separation he has lived through and the difficulties that await him, or he will perish without anyone hearing about it. In the latter case, he becomes humus useful to prakriti, a humus with a definite function to fulfil, however humble.

On the other hand, most of a Master's disciples remain close to him all their lives. They are a necessity for the Guru, just as the presence of the Guru is a necessity for them. These disciples have a precise role to fill. They are the fine matter which the Master uses to manifest his work in Prakriti. Without them, the Master would be merely a radiance, but

through their presence these disciples establish the circle in which the Master's vibrations create the ferment of possible evolution.

Until the disciple assumes his responsibilities, it is the Master's stomach that works and digests for him. But the disciple continues to question his Master: "Who are you?" Krishnamurti answers by saying: "I have never read any sacred books...." The disciples of Ma Anandamayi cut things short with the words: "She has never received anything from anyone, since she already knew everything when she was born!" Also, one could answer with another question: "Who can tell what the Pathans, that proud people of the Northern Frontier, are made of?" They were originally Aryans who became Muslims after having been Buddhist; but above all, they are to this day the vigorous children of their own land.

Some of the disciples who left their ashram have acted like all the mystics who, at a given moment, called the crowds to them. Likewise, Shri Ramakrishna in his exaltation used to climb to the roof of the temple at Dakshineshvar near Calcutta and, weeping, would cry out, "Come to me from everywhere, disciples! So that I may teach you.... I am ready!" Others, like Shri Ramana Maharshi, through their silence and concentration have compelled those who approached them to ask themselves the question, "Who am I?"

Among "the independents" wandering about, there were those called *cārvākas* because they rebelled against all learned, expounded orthodoxies. Some have found fame without looking for it. Some have allowed followers to gather around them. Others have repeatedly fled from the slavery created by the excessive solicitude of their disciples. Still others have accepted this bondage with a definite aim known to them alone. Many of them have lived incognito in the midst of the world, hidden in the crowd and have died without leaving any apparent trace. Since the *cārvākas* have never been written about, it is only indirectly, through the reactions

they aroused, that their name has circulated by word of mouth. The orthodox followers of every tradition have pursued and persecuted them, considering their freedom and influence too great.

Should one attempt to say what *cārvākas* are? It is written that Brihaspati, a Vedic sage,¹ was their ancestor. Fragments of their teachings are scattered throughout the *Katha Upanishad*, the *Mahabharata*, and also the Buddhist texts, since in the time of the Buddha, their voice was listened to very attentively. But their enemies gave such distorted descriptions of their positivist, anti-ritualist philosophy centred on the search for the "I" that later they hid themselves with their well-guarded secret. They knew the paths leading to knowledge.

There is an enormous disparity between quality and quantity; quality hides within, whereas quantity spreads outward.

He who possesses the gift of captivating the imagination of the many and of transforming it into creative imagination is a born Guru. When a lamp is used, its light loses none of its brilliance, but when one takes a pound of sugar out of a bag of provisions it leaves an empty space in the mass of material. When receiving the *darśan*² of a Master, one touches the spirit itself, but as soon as one makes arrangements to stay close to him, the "downward curve" begins and the Law of gravity immobilizes the spirit.

One cannot escape from this Law, nor from its process of materialization. Owing to its constantly moving densities, matter will always be either somewhat more or somewhat less receptive to spirit.

The Guru sees what is happening with an intelligence that is not the intelligence of his disciples. He dwells at the centre of an esoteric circle which, of course, carries its own limitations; but this circle is far above the circle in which

¹ Teacher of the Vedic gods.

² To be in the Master's presence, to be seen by him; the establishment of a current between Master and disciple.

the disciples move. In comparison with them, he is living in knowledge.

However, the Guru is well aware that this knowledge is relative, and that he himself is a seeker in relation to knowledge existing in the circle above him. A Guru who thinks he has reached the end of his search would be an impostor; a disciple who imagines him thus to satisfy himself would be a fanatic, cutting himself off from the Laws, from the ascending and descending movements that support life.

Why would you want the moment of knowledge to last? Even Brahma cannot keep what he creates for himself! Everything springs from him and immediately flows out. Millions of gods or of Laws at once take possession of it. We are a humble part of those who are trying to swim upstream. And what do we find? Close by we hear the repeated calls of Krishnamurti, who is becoming impatient, because, despite the shocks he produces, Great Nature does not transform itself. He halts people caught in the circumstances of life and cries, "Stop! Understand who you are! Understand what you are doing!"

Elsewhere, in the sphere she governs, the Mother of Sri Aurobindo's ashram declares, "O Nature, material Mother, you said that you would collaborate in the transformation of man; and there is no limit to the splendour of such collaboration." The unfolding of time enters into play here, in the very play of prakriti.

Ma Anandamayi was the first in history, faithful, moreover, to the Buddhist tradition still widespread in Bengal, to roam about Northern India, stopping to sleep and eat only in temple resthouses, completely cut off from the rhythm of life. For years she lived almost continually in ecstasy without any relationship with her surroundings. She returned gradually to the human state, at first unconsciously through a known process. Now she has voluntarily returned within the rhythm of Prakriti to transmit her experience to those around her and teach a way of possible expansion.

What tools will the Master use? The ones that suit him best. What difference is there between a bare room like the one in which we are speaking together now and a room filled with a hodgepodge like a bazaar? The Master utilizes the means that are needed to bring his disciple to him. Some day perhaps, if such is his wish and need, he will take the very bones of his disciple, crush them, make a pie out of them and offer them to the gods. He can make use of the trust the disciple has placed in him, his submission, and even the essence of his being (*bhūta*), to the uttermost limits.

So what remains of the disciple, once his bones have been crushed? Nothing. For him it is death. There are deliberate deaths in which the blood flows, as in many temple sacrifices where the bodies of the decapitated goats keep on jumping and twitching until all life departs. What is it that is freed by death? There is also the secret of dogs, those beasts branded by the curse of impurity, who hide under a bush to die with a dignity the *sannyāsins* envy and hope to have at the moment of their own death. One of the hardest commandments in the initiation into *sannyāsa* is: "When the day comes, know how to die like the dog, with dignity, unnoticed."

Does the disciple know that by his death he is serving the "essence of the Guru?" Can ashes know what use they have? If he so desires, the Guru can swallow up his disciple. He can use the liberated energy, just as we do in eating the food we need. The interdependence of functions exists; it is right and normal. The *Bhagavad Gita* states clearly how few out of a million pass through the narrow gate. But the aspiration is there. How can we know what is above us, since we only control the relationship of the planes of consciousness that we have acquired? That is why death in the "Guru's essence" is the highest goal we can desire. We cannot lift our prakṛiti any higher. The best we can do is to unify, in all our reactions, the raw material of our nature with the movements of the spirit and to place these reactions in the heart — the heart that becomes the "seat of the Guru"

(*gadi*). This movement in itself is the voluntary death of the ego. It is only in this voluntary death that the Guru sees what is permanent in us: the fact of existing (*sat*). He can only give it form and animate it. In this he is like the Creator in *Genesis*, removing one of Adam's ribs to free the divine *śakti* who is ready to give birth. Without this shock coming from above, no transformation is possible.

Another transformation is to give birth in ourselves to *śakti*'s child. This child will manifest a different prakriti than ours, different in quality. The child will call right away for a plaything. He must hold something in his hands to have the pleasure of throwing it on the ground, of picking it up, of giving it away, and taking it back, without any logic in his movements, just for the sake of moving around and discovering what life is. So always surround yourselves with plenty of toys, for yourselves and for others....

METHOD AND TEACHING

How can one conceive of pure Existence (*sat*) in the heart of life? A characteristic feature of thought is to transmute the concrete into the abstract; and in the end, thought becomes interested only in the abstract. It is a kind of escape. The relation with life is then simply cut off. But when man, impelled by his desire to know himself, resolutely looks into himself, he resists the temptation to be carried away by the abstract.

In this regard, the energy that has been withdrawn from the outer realm will quite naturally become more intense as it reaches the inner realm. If this intensity is merely the repercussion of a shock coming from life in the world, it may devastate the field of consciousness. Having been damaged, consciousness no longer has any aim. But if this intensity is knowingly guided, it can lead to the perception of pure Existence (*sat*), in which the polarity between subject and object is resolved in a feeling of identity.

This experience, in which the dualities arising from the polarity of consciousness cease through natural absorption, lies beyond all other experiences in the midst of life. It is a creative matrix which gives birth to new forms. This is an important experience even in its very early stages. During a certain period the need for quietude can be dominant, but to attribute to it a negative value would be to fail to recognize the rhythm of Nature. It would be more exact to see it as a prelude to the need to create. In fact, when a pupil plunges into himself, his force appears to be lost. This force will reappear, but where and when? It is precisely during this period that the true Guru gives active protection and support to his disciple.

We look on confidently at all the movements of interiorized consciousness. It seems sometimes to be passive, inert, like dead matter, but actually it is a living force with a quite

definite quality of feeling. In this respect, a perception has to be evaluated according to the quality of energy it frees in the realm of feeling and in the realm of will. In the realm of will, it becomes dispassionate and disinterested action, and in that of feeling it becomes the sublimation of some fundamental emotions of the heart.

In practice, quietude can easily appear like a high place from which to face life's problems. In that case, the technique to be followed consists in counterbalancing all positive energy with negative energy, knowing that both come from the Void. Without deviation, consciousness then takes a direction that it will maintain. All along the way its own vigilance is able to transform the emotional movements it encounters, even to the point that one can speak of the absorption of shocks through an absence of inner resistance. This is not inactivity, for will is present, operating in the realm of time with a clear vision of what reality is. This vision (*kavikratu*) has already been described by the Vedic sages.

The 'space-time' concept of the *Upanishads* has become the measure of existence in which everything "moves without movement," for all movement, in the end, is merely the displacement of what is contained in a seed, a seed that is self-sufficient, withdrawing into itself if it chooses. Thus, a seed of thought can, at any instant of its development, intensify its energies in perceiving its existence. It has no necessity to evolve, and yet it does evolve! Therein lies the mystery beyond intellect, the static state of the dynamism of pure Existence (*sat*) in life.

In the *sāstras* there is an oft-repeated precept that one should never speak in vain of one's spiritual experiences. If you do so, it shows that you have nothing yet in your own being that is valid and able to preserve the current of power that has come down to you. He who readily talks about himself is like a little child who runs to his mother to tell her about everything he came across while he was playing.

Before you speak about an experience, you must learn to observe it in silence for a long time. First, it has to find its place in you, to be clarified and to bear fruit. In short, it must become yours. While this is going on, life is reduced to a few movements and a few expressed thoughts.

The Great Manu¹ taught three important rules which should never be forgotten:

1. Speak only when you are questioned.
2. Remain silent if you are asked an illogical question or if you detect a disguised motive in it.
3. Keep silent among fools; play with them on their level.

Never uphold your personal ideas in discussion with a saint, a wise man, a *paṇḍit*, nor with a Brahmin who knows the *Vedas*, nor yet with your parents.

The *yogi*'s role is not to be a saviour of souls; but by the fact of persistently and deliberately working on his own ego, he impels an inner power in us that will open our eyes to our own egos.

When one has consciously set out on the path of search, there is no turning back. It is as though one were intoxicated. But the impetus of the start is often slowed down by all the heavy and useless burdens we carry with us.

In an episode of the *Avadhūta*² the crow tells a story: "I was flying with a piece of meat in my beak. Twenty crows were chasing me and quarrelling, trying to grab it. I had to fly high and fool them. I was weary. Suddenly, I dropped the piece of meat and saw the twenty crows in a great hurry and with loud cawings gliding down after it and fighting over it. Then I shook my wings. How wonderful it felt not to have anything to carry. All the sky belonged to me!"

¹ The person thought to be the father of the human race. He is credited with a code of laws which has retained considerable authority up to the present day.

² Book XI, chapters 7-10 of the *Bhagavatapurana*, a vast treatise probably dating from the sixth century.

Every spiritual discipline is a detailed work. After a period of conscious efforts, there is always a period of temporary retreat, of "cave life," to attain mastery over the disorderly movements of prakriti, which defends itself and attacks in a sly way. We should not talk about the force of prakriti. It remains a secret.

During this period three rules should be followed:

1. Be humble so as to disarm that which resists.
2. Accept everything.
3. Be intimate with no one.

If these three rules are respected, the "abstract sound" propelling the effort will remain pure.

The couch grass that has encroached a field causes great havoc. Likewise, in man, an objective vision, even if fragmentary, works on him and cannot be uprooted. Once one has learned to see, one can no longer live like a blind man. Every question, whatever it is, carries its own answer and reveals the prison of him who asks it. The Master touches the sensitive point where the freedom he reveals and the disciple's obscurities confront one another. One could also say that, at the point where the liberty of the disciple who is progressing comes up against the discipline demanded by the Guru, then that discipline appears like a prison.

An unusual quality of courage is needed to follow the advice, "Rely only on yourself!" This is the same as saying, "Isolate and cultivate the direct experience you are living until it becomes a part of yourself. Do not reveal it until you are able to connect it with something known and precise."

The difficulty arises from the fact that one is surrounded by other disciples, each of whom remains enclosed in concern for his own personal discipline. Everyone is working by himself. The same holds true for the gods. In every temple, each god is seated on his own lotus flower. But collectively the gods are the permanent supports of a definite effort, whereas in their individual efforts disciples have only a momentary stability.

If you ask an old disciple or a co-disciple to help you, he will stay close to you, but if you do not follow his way, he will exclude you from his thoughts. At any moment you risk feeling rejected by the group of disciples. To pass from one level of understanding to another is equivalent to a surgical operation. Many lack the courage to get over the obstacles before them and in order not to see them, they "ossify" their base, which gives them a rock of certainty to hang on to. From then on, such disciples are always talking about their sincerity as being an essential quality of *yoga*, whereas the man who is daring enough to follow the Law in its farthest ramifications is the one who makes the "spiritual discovery."

There is in man such anguish, such dissatisfaction with himself that even if he had thousands of words at his disposal, they would not suffice to express it. His pursuit of all the things by which he seeks some solace will never bring him the inner peace desired. And how could it be otherwise? Every path he follows is thorny. Disgusted by the difficulties, he abandons one path after another. Until he awakens to himself, and realizes that he is in fact the owner of his own field, he will lament but he will never acquire the ploughshare and the plough with which to till it thoroughly!

While meditating, one is often tempted either to force the mind to pursue a definite line or to get rid of the influx of thoughts. However, the only correct way is to harmonize the waves of impressions with the indispensable plane of peace. The ritual of the Vaishnavites, the worshippers of Vishnu, gives valuable indications on this subject: instead of torturing the mind in order to make it pass through the eye of a needle, one must draw to oneself the full "life of the body" and the entire "consciousness of the body" in order to serve the Divine in a particular aspect, to receive him, to surround him and to worship him. Thus, little by little, a unity of consciousness is established, which makes use of all the levels of the being and all conscious and unconscious efforts. Then peace and impressions become one.

In spiritual discipline, movements of attraction and repulsion are normal until such time as one reaches a certain equilibrium. Four levels have to be passed through to reach the concept of the Void:

1. Primordial ignorance.
2. The plane of the ego, which is the matter of prakriti with pleasure and pain in all their forms.
3. The "I" that makes it possible to observe oneself.
4. The Void that is everything and nothing.

Primitive man in darkness (*tamas*) is very close to his animal instincts, very close to the earth with a consciousness that is not awakened. For him, to have reached the plane of the ego is an achievement with which he will remain for a long time, perhaps for several successive lives, before an impulse of another order arises. For Nature allows only a very slow development. She is more inclined to favour a change of species than a change of consciousness.

One of the great Samkhya disciplines is the idea of returning to what is basically primitive in us, to the point where, for the first time, an act of conscious will has given a direction to the current of life. This discipline proposes, through methodical observation, to follow the path of thought "backward" as well as in its normal development. Then we perceive that the only foods or substances that have permanent value are those that issue from the essence of the being, whereas everything that has come from outside has been almost obliterated. To find this point again is equivalent to seeing clearly when and how our personal destiny (*dharma*) is formed. Each time this takes place, it produces a shock which makes a step forward possible.

Spirit and matter are two different aspects of the same reality. Every creation is generated in the Void. The same is true of the resistance engendered in the equipotential field of energy. Resistance creates the sensation of a compact entity we term body or matter.

Thus, on the one hand, one can say that the body is no-

thing but the accomplishment of the spirit. On the other hand, one can say that spirit is like the blazing of the body when it is consuming its own energy. Life is the automatic combustion of the body. Heat is transformed into light. So one has the following parallelism:

matter — heat — light
body — life — spirit

If you conceive of reality as coming down from the spirit to the body, you are following the teaching of Samkhya. If you start with the body to rise toward the spirit, you are seekers. But if, with an ever wakeful attention, you perceive clearly the interrelation between the descending and ascending movements, you can dare to work in both ways. Then you are on the path of Tantrism. May you one day pursue a true Tantric discipline in the broadest and noblest meaning of the word.

Certainly the most authentic picture of Shri Ramakrishna is the one given by Swami Vivekananda, who saw in him a fully realized man. If Shri Ramakrishna submitted to a Tantric discipline for nine years, it was in order to escape from the imprisonment within himself caused by the notions of "good" and "evil", and to be able later to utilize them freely.

For those who only saw Shri Ramakrishna at the end of his life, it is easy to say that he was born in a state of grace and followed no *yoga* to show the way; hence the assertion expressed in a meeting of *paṇḍits* that he was born an incarnation (*avatār*). This is to ignore the entire Tantric period of his life, just as many years in the life of Christ are ignored and unknown.

The seated position (*āsana*) is for each of us the one we naturally come back to in order to find ourselves again. In this position there is no tension. The body is flexible.

"I find in myself again the form of myself, which is well known to me in every detail, for nothing is left to chance. I am seated quietly, my spinal column erect. I am looking

straight ahead. Even if at first my eyes are closed, they continue to look straight ahead. I know how I sit, how I get up, how I walk, how I hold my head and place my hands."

Each of these movements is a voluntary movement connected with the *āsana* that makes it possible to collect oneself in a quiet moment. Everything is related to the dignity of the inner being. In life, everyone uses the body for the role one has to play. This body is both instrument and vehicle; the first duty is to care for it. Each gesture takes place by itself in a moment of interiorization, without the intervention of the will or of thought.

There is much to be said about the secret role of the "locks" in the body. To preserve one's force and energy during moments of interiorization, a certain automatism must be gradually acquired. This is an automatic system of detection for catching any kind of contraction, since the slightest tension is an indication of a wrong direction. In brief:

1. The chin will tilt toward the chest. This movement happens of itself; it corresponds to a certain letting go of tension in the spinal column, which releases the knots in the nerves. Then the abdomen spontaneously becomes concave. These two movements are so closely connected that they are practically one, with a slight lapse of time between them.

2. Another automatic movement follows: namely, the extension of the chest, without any hardening.

3. The anus closes without any contraction, giving the energy an upward direction. The closed anus is the nadir point of a current that must be maintained. If this "lock" is not closed, the inner body will be progressively invaded by depressive and negative emotions that have no connection with the realm of true sensation.

When a perfect chord vibrates between Master and disciple, a continuous conversation proceeds between them without any words being uttered. This takes place even without inner dialogue. At this stage the function of speech

is no longer activated because the inner organs (*indriyas*), which link the five sense organs to their objects, no longer play a role.

On both sides, communication then becomes pure vibration. One of the conditions of this state is to be able to think without words. So long as words or any formulation arise in thought or in prayer, it means that this vibration, which is in itself creative, is not taking place.

The constant repetition of a sacred word (*mantra*), at first consciously, then rapidly in a mechanical and unconscious way (*japa*), is one means of minimizing the consciousness of the ego. On the other hand, the voluntary discipline of silence, one or two fixed hours during the day, or a whole day each week, leads by stages to that inner silence which is one of the most delicate of disciplines.

The vibration of thought and of speech without words has no connection with telepathy. On a certain level this vibration exists between Master and disciple because they share the same vision.

The work of inner silence is concerned with reaching the seed-bed of thought, which is the only way to return to the initial movement of the inner organs of perception. At that moment everything around you fades away of itself. It is a strange mode of perception in which the will no longer interferes. The voluntary stopping of thought leads to direct contact with the initial point of silence where the basic note of all known harmonics resounds.

Thus we come to a very few thoughts, through which one single "sound" says many things. For instance, "*ā*" means: come, enter, approach, hold what I give you, etc., "*djā*" means: go out, it is finished, this is not the moment, etc. Thus, between silence and a flood of words, one can live with some ten syllables in whose vibrations it is possible to understand languages one does not know.

Along this same line of ideas, it is astonishing to see how the questions put to a Master are all alike. If Shri Ramana Maharshi lived for so long amidst his own people without

speaking, it is because his basic note responded to all the vibrations of the people around him.

Every master of Samkhya speaks about the plurality of "I"s. He will say, in different ways, that at the start, the "I" towards which all the "I"s converge is only theoretically the Void. Through a meticulous discipline you draw close to an "I" from which you can calmly observe yourself. From there the world is seen with all its mechanical movements; from there, for brief moments, you may have a glimpse of that "I" which is the Void.

The next step cannot be taught by any book. It must be lived degree by degree, and lived with the Master holding one's hand. It is the slow discovery that finally there is no "I" but only "that which is active" in you. At that moment something can take place, but the vision is so fugitive that the least movement can destroy it. It is there, both inside and outside. We experience it and see it at the same time. We also see the mechanicity of all those things that come from nowhere and go nowhere. If we do not see this with eyes full of wonder, we then have an impression of self-extinction. But if we find ourselves in the midst of unexpected miracles, the movement of prakriti ceases for an instant, and we are totally one with an impression of life and of a spiritual radiance.

At that moment the disciple can say: "I am seized by a real feeling of dissociation. I am not here.... I am not there.... Where am I? Anguish could grip me, but a readjustment is certain, I have only to wait for it. I know it will take place, I can trust it, as it is automatic! I shall find myself again facing prakriti with whom I can now play in the movement of manifestation." In that instant, the ego will have faded.

The Void exists. Two Sanskrit terms make this clear: *pudgala-nairātmya*, the Void within the ego; and *dharma-nairātmya*, the Void of the twelve, twenty-four and forty-eight cosmic Laws. Having arrived at this point of comprehension, it is possible to see how prakriti works.

Tantric teaching demonstrates that all life is born from the Void, including the gods and goddesses and the higher and the lower Prakriti. The Void is the matrix of universal energy.

It is difficult to realize that everything takes place inevitably at the moment when it is normal for something to happen. We do not want to admit that for Prakriti, man, animal, plant or mineral are merely a reserve of humus. And she needs a great deal of it. All natural cataclysms are necessities. Only the quality of the humus matters to Prakriti. In this order of things, man plays a definite role of which he is still unconscious. Those who are becoming progressively less enslaved by nature, often have a very refined natural intelligence. This natural intelligence knows how to make full use of what is recorded by the senses as well as of recurrences of every kind.

The first question asked by man: "Why?" brings about a considerable change. With that he becomes the enemy of Prakriti, and she defends herself. And yet, so long as he asks "why?" he will make no progress because everything manifested in him, so even in a subtle way, like the spirit, is still Prakriti, including his search and its ascending movement.

The *Vedas* mention a precise moment when the immobile has become the mobile, and another moment when the mobile becomes the undifferentiated.

It is not possible to approach the "why" of the first cause since there is no logical answer to it, but the question remains as to "how" did the first movement that ever existed occur. This penetrates into the heart of the process of creation and the cosmic Laws. The fineness of the sensation of a real immobility of the body which has reached a state without any tension, and the subtlety of the elements composing the multiple envelopes (*koṣas*) of the psychic body, make it possible for thought to become the seat of a passive experience. Then it may be that a certain sensation of existing is mani-

fested, which is very similar to the life hidden in a seed, a life of full power without any apparent movement.

Even if this sensation of existing were perceived for only a fraction of a second, it would nevertheless suffice to know what took place at the instant when the "immobile" became the "mobile," or as expressed in more usual terms—for to know what took place at the instant of the first spontaneous vibration between the "immobile" and the "mobile." Here one touches a clearly scientific problem in which the intervention of imagination would only be confusing.

He who truly goes through the experience of "non-being" in a state of deep meditation feels suddenly filled by such a surge of life that, for that very reason, the question of the "why" of things no longer exists for him. This surge of life is the imperative descent of non-being to being. It is at the same time an all-pervading sensation and a recognizable flavour. It is a certitude that wipes out every question.

One has evidence of this process in the certainty with which Shri Ramakrishna gave himself up to ecstasies that sometimes lasted several days. Shri Ramakrishna knew very well that there would come a moment when this surge of life would take place; it is the evident return to life in the layers of the body and the reappearance of known sensations, while passing through all the stages of consciousness.

No great *yogi* goes into contemplation or deep meditation before knowing with precision the Laws of re-connection or, in other words, the limits of this temporary flight. He need fear no surprises, knowing as he does through experience the exact relationship between all the elements at his disposal; but for the disciples around him, who look after his body, this process naturally takes on the appearance of a miracle. The disciples see what is happening only from the outside. In fact, there is here an experience of which the *yogi* alone knows the exact formula. It cannot be transmitted; it cannot be communicated, because it is the result of an exact connection between pure Existence (*sat*) and the

innate essence of the man who attempts the experience.

He who, even once in his life and for a fraction of a second, has touched that point X in which the "mobile" emerges from the "immobile," or, conversely, the point at which the "mobile" becomes the "immobile", has perceived in himself something of pure Consciousness (*cit*). He has perceived the undifferentiated, which is living! Alas, at the very moment he becomes aware of it, from fear of losing it, he gives it a name and form (*nāma-rūpa*) under the illusion that he will be better able to find it again. And yet, what was alive has faded away, the sensation has vanished. Symbolically, this is the moment when Shiva, seeing himself for the first time in a mirror, is overjoyed by the sight of this 'second,' which he discovers and which becomes manifestation. This is the end of the divine solitude.

We feel rested after a night's sleep, and this is so even though this completely unconscious sleep is a return to the matrix of life. People in whom nothing is awakened literally fall asleep without knowing how to "detach" something in themselves that will remain conscious. In their heavy state of *tamas*, they are not even aware that they are asleep.

The best way to go to sleep is to do it consciously. Patanjali has pointed out four kinds of sleep, closely related to the *gunas*:

1. Heavy sleep in the unconsciousness of *tamas*, which is a kind of stupor.

2. Sleep filled with dreams and bewildering elements coming from *rajas*.

3. Sleep in which something remains alert because a quality of consciousness doesn't entirely disappear. In this kind of sleep, the being consciously seizes something coming from *sattva*. Something remains like an impression of night illumined by the moon.

4. Conscious sleep in which one touches the mystery of truth.

At the moment when consciousness fades away into sleep,

a flash can be perceived that is exactly like the flash at the moment of awakening. These two flashes are of the same nature, of the same substance. It is said, symbolically, that this brightness lights up the head behind the forehead and is diffused throughout the head. It is represented by the moon which always adorns the forehead of Shiva.

Conscious sleep resembles the sleep of a mother who is sleeping beside her child. The child's sleep is tamasic. The mother is resting, but nevertheless her sleep has a quality of alertness on account of the presence of the baby, whereas a part of herself makes use of a conscious sleep that is fed by the forces of life.

There is a detailed technique for attaining this 'yogic sleep,' which is no longer entirely mechanical and no longer obeys psychological laws. Nor has it anything to do with the natural sleep of a healthy man. That is why one of the first questions a Guru asks his disciple is "How do you sleep?" and his first concern is to teach him gradually to sleep without dreaming. Another question will be "How long do you sleep?" The answer depends on the importance attached to nocturnal vigils and meditations which are an obstacle to physiological sleep, when the silent night should be a time primarily devoted to a gradual work of conscious interiorization, followed by voluntary sleep in a state of awakened consciousness. This sleep, in a body without fatigue and without tensions (except for the minimal fatigue caused by the wear and tear of time) and in a studied posture, which is always the same,¹ becomes the field of many experiences.

Learn how to go to sleep consciously, starting from a very sensitive waking state, for the descent into voluntary sleep in a state of awakened consciousness has a counterpart. It is the awakening in awakened consciousness, which likewise demands a precise discipline.

If you know this state of awakened consciousness in

¹ See the Buddha's posture, lying on his right side, the right arm under the head, the left foot resting on the right foot.

sleep, then you have become like the silk thread of a necklace from which all the pearls have been unstrung, one by one, in a given order. The pearls can be restrung consciously, one by one beginning with the last, in the same rhythm with which they were unstrung. A vigilant eye follows the process. While the pearls continue to be added to one another, an X period of time will pass and, as the last pearl is added, the eyes will open. Was one really asleep or not? The answer is "yes and no."

Shri Ramakrishna often spoke about this awakened consciousness during voluntary sleep. He said, "Enter voluntary sleep starting from the heart and not from a lower centre." To picture this experience, one must imagine a lamp lit in the heart. Concentrate on the heart and move progressively to the higher planes that you know. Then, when you are sure of yourself and it is possible for you to fill all the centres of your body in the same way, without suppressing your natural impulses such as desires, greediness and passion, try it. This method has been confirmed by many yogis.



OBSERVATION OF ONESELF

In observing oneself, the first thing to do is to discover whether it is the intellect, the will, or emotions that predominate in ourselves. Even if one of the three plays the part of hero, the others nonetheless exist. To establish coordination between the three is a long, and exacting labour. Without this co-ordination, one of these elements will develop abnormally, and then neither the Master nor the pupil will be able to do anything about it.

To discover yourself, try to abandon your thoughts. Try to return consciously to animal life, to what is most primitive in you; at that moment, you will know what really belongs to you. Later, another experience will be to return consciously to the life of the plant. A plant produces flowers in its own good time, without any publicity. And these flowers provide food for butterflies.

In observing oneself, nothing is necessary but these voluntary "returns" which allow us to discover what is positive and negative in us. The true work is to integrate fully these observations.

In India, we speak of castes. One is necessarily born into one or the other caste and enters into a life full of natural movements in which all kinds of influences (*saṁskāras*) are in play. This development is entirely automatic and would remain so were it not for the shocks blindly distributed by the cosmic energy of *śakti*. This energy knocks over anyone who happens to be in its way or who stands up to it. Its whim is our luck! The shocks that come from it create rebellion. These are brief moments of awakening.

Without such rebellion, man would not be conscious of his reactions; he would not begin to struggle against the unknown force that defies him. Only he who responds to the attack will, when the time comes, meet a Guru, that is, a guide, a protector; but this protector, while ensuring the

desired protection, may become later on the one who will consciously direct the shocks of *śakti* within his disciple.

The *Tantras* say, on this subject, that spiritual discipline must be followed with regularity, even if it involves necessary breaks. In any case, sudden deviations are inevitable in order to create the elements of new life. Shocks coming from one's surroundings are always a stimulant, the more so if they are provoked by the Guru himself.

It is not always possible to recognize from where shocks come, for they often have the same appearance and bring the same suffering. And it is only suffering that helps us discover a deeply embedded root that resists the shocks.

By being born into this or that caste, a man is a slave to men stronger than himself, just as every beast has to submit to stronger beasts. Through successive shocks from *śakti*, man will pass through successive inner births and each time all that he knows will have to be re-learned and re-evaluated on another plane. Impressions (*saṁskāras*) will appear always in the same succession and according to the same recurrence, but the densities will be different. Heavy as lead at the start, they will little by little become as light as the fleecy substance of the clouds.

A living spirituality is in itself too primordial to be grasped by the intellect. Philosophers try in vain to explain in words what we feel. Two important points of this extreme positivism must be detected: the heart, as the seat of the emotions; and sex, with its repercussions, which are still deeper and more overwhelming than those of the heart. We could "be" and "do" if we were capable of uniting the pure feelings of the heart and the pure desires of sex; in this way, we would discover the very essence of man. The ordinary Christian has the idea of paradise and of hell to help him in his evolution and, between the two, morality and the precepts of charity. But in this morality no one is able to give a place to the atomic bomb and the extermination camps, which, in *prakṛiti*, have their place. The result is a strong rejection of responsibility which does not diminish in any

way the two natural and automatic movements of prakriti.

The ordinary Hindu has, for himself, a system of evaluation comparable to a stairway, making it possible at each step to recognize new values, which include light and shade. Good and evil are two aspects of the same thing. Certain steps are hard to climb because of the demands inherent in them; and they arise from cosmic Laws. Fortunately, the time factor is there to soften any too violent movement.

It would be unfortunate to remain a long time on any one step of the stairway, enjoying or tepidly satisfied with a state attained or rediscovered, for then there would follow a sluggishness which is like a slow death, a true sleep in complete unconsciousness.

The steps of the stairway represent man's possible evolution. If man is free from his movements, has he the possibility of choosing their direction? His power of choice depends on his level of consciousness, and he has to learn how to discover, at his "point of departure," what are his particular conditions and possibilities. All the rest belongs to the play (*līlā*) of prakriti. If nothing resists her, if nothing stands in her way, prakriti will thoroughly enjoy herself, her role being to create and to eat her own creation, if it does not rise in self-defence.

To work in order to know one's point of departure means to enter into a detailed observation of oneself. If this work is attempted by a mind that does not analyze all that it perceives, the armature of logic is broken down as well as the ability of the intelligence to create compromises. The Hindu "swallows" things more easily; he digests them without thinking. He puts his trust in the Lord Shiva, who is continually swallowing the poison of the world so that his throat is blue from it, yet without letting this disturb his divine play.¹

It is important that he who works toward his own evolu-

¹ The gods and the demons met together to churn the ocean and extract its nectar (*amṛta*). It appeared; but hoping for something still more precious, the gods and the devils continued to churn. Then poison appeared.

tion should discover what kind of link exists between his belief and his life as it is lived day by day. Something links the two, if it be no more than a mechanical continuity. It may be that some form of meditation will become established one day, making use at first of only ordinary coarse habits; but this meditation will finally become purer. Later on, of its own accord, it will take a different form.

A lived experience is always sustained by a living paradox:

"If you search for God, you will surely not find Him."

"If you search for power, you will never have it."

God prefers one who struggles against Him¹ to one who is lukewarm. We can develop in ourselves only what is already in our essence. "If you have a power in yourself, you can make it grow — absolutely nothing else."

According to a popular saying, "If you worship God, He will ruin you, but if after that you still love Him, He will become the slave of your slave." An illustration of this saying is given in the *caṇḍi*,² as follows: "The demon Shumba felt the desire to possess *śakti*, appearing as a goddess who had come down from heaven. He said to his messenger: 'I want this woman. If she does not come to me, I shall drag her to me by the hair. Go tell her so!' The messenger left and transmitted the demon's order. The goddess smiled and said to the messenger; 'I made a vow a very long time ago, before I heard of a master like yours. It was this: My husband will be none other than he who insults my pride! Tell your master to come to me and ask to marry me! I am awaiting him!' "

In every spiritual discipline the great obstacle is fear. Another obstacle, still more dangerous, is meek and passive obedience. A famous Guru said: "I am surrounded by people who do everything I wish, who obey all my requests.

¹ In India, one who struggles against God... see p. 101 ff.

² One of the oldest *Puranic* texts forming part of the *Markandeyapurana*.

They are merely real sheep! I would rather see people work from love, a love, that starts a fire generating life. Unruly children are the ones who have in them the most possibilities."

If we obey our passions — greed, anger, envy, laziness, it is because we worship them as idols well hidden in us. If we throw light on them, we cannot avoid seeing their true forms and finding them horrible. We detest them and at the same time do not wish to be separated from them.

There is an exact science for cultivating memory; conversely, there is an exact science for the cultivation of forgetting. The one is as important as the other. Every day I eat with pleasure, but do I save the skin of an orange from which I have extracted the juice? In the same way, the past has its importance, but one has to remember events as they come to mind without allowing feeling to enter in. Each day a child plays with the toys that amused him the day before, but without remembering the sensations he experienced, for he does not connect one thing with another. We must consciously return to this possibility.

You must learn to welcome consciously the most unexpected events of life, to be entirely transparent in front of them, without any motivation as to right or wrong. At that moment avoid all judgement, for you do not know what Law is in operation.

Hold back your prakriti in all the spontaneous movements that may arise in you, so that it does not flow out or become diverted toward the prakriti of others. This calls for no withdrawal on your part; but it allows you to prevent heavy matters from becoming agglutinated with other disordered heavy matters. Then you will be able to observe the movements and erratic nature of others and this will help you to catch sight of your own movements. At that point, some control can be exercised, but only of yourself. This state of transparency has a relation to what one can also call "self-remembering," if one clearly understands that

prakriti includes the entire being in the multitude of its conscious and unconscious manifestations.

Only little by little does one become acquainted with the idea of the Void.

The best way to approach it is to watch how things take place. What we call our will is not really ours. It is simply a stirring of prakriti in us — an automatic movement.

It must not be forgotten that if the flower bud has been formed, the full bloom will follow quite naturally. Then why be impatient? All true creation occurs in silence. Open yourself more and more, or rather let Great Nature unfold herself in you. A blossoming will follow as a logical development. Our only duty is to be contained within ourselves and to be fully vigilant.

The following paradox is revealing: One must keep a firm hold on the rudder of the boat that symbolizes our life, become one with it, risk everything without ever letting go of the helm. At the same time, one must know that everything is impermanent — the boat, the sea and ourselves. Although holding fast, I give up everything in advance. I hold fast, while measuring the impermanence of everything. At that moment the play of thought ceases, there is only the "I" that knows, in the pulsation of my blood.

Do not hurry in any of your actions; be aware of exactly what dictates them. Control your thoughts rigorously before acting; this will make you slower in starting an action and will help you to maintain carefully your integrity. You will feel an inner satisfaction if you try to have this attitude. Never make a sudden decision. As women say, "Haste makes a bad curry!"

Pay attention to everything you do, for the smallest things are the most important. Pay attention to everything you think. This control will be established once and for all as soon as you know how to record a fact in itself. Speak to the heart but without using words. Learn to live in this discipline so as to manifest the life within you.

Those who transmit a teaching do so because they have decided to return towards the masses and to help others approach the threshold of knowledge. But one must realise that no particle of truth can be given, for we never know anything of another's thought. To believe it would be to create for oneself an illusion as dangerously false as that of human love. Truth can be lived only after a very long purification.

There are several disciplines of voluntary detachment.

A traditional one is that of the adepts of Vedanta, who put an end to the relation of cause and effect (*karma*) by plunging into detachment through the solemn vows of *sannyāsa*. From that time on, their discipline is constantly to discriminate between the real and the unreal. That is why, under the ochre robe, there are so many monks who, at the beginning of their asceticism, are wicked, miserly, greedy and liars. They are cleansing the inner being. This work is slow and painstaking. Throughout this asceticism and because of their robe, they are sustained by those around them, helped by the whole of a society that trusts them, by the people who ask their blessing and fear their anger.

Another traditional discipline is that in which, in everyday life, I consciously die to myself each evening, to be reborn each morning, infinitely relaxed and supple. It is life in its fullness in the immediate present. "I am the thread of the necklace, the thread of continuity, holding the beads together." Each bead is an experience. Each bead is perfect in itself in relation to its transmuted raw material. Who am I, if not the whole of these transmutations? To pass beyond them, I must first bring them back to a central point.

The process of externalization of any spiritual experience must be observed with care and precision. Our attention must be directed for a very long time to this, for it will reveal how the opposite process of interiorization occurs, provided the observer knows how to see what takes place in himself.

The mystery will always be that "the All" is discovered by withdrawing into oneself, and not through the process

of exteriorization. Within oneself, there is no longer any submission to an outer will, but an immersion in the principle of a higher will. The Baul and the Sufi know this very well. One returns from this a different being, even if one cannot make the experience last. It is illuminating. That is all. Intellectually, one invents means to reach it, whereas it is rather a question of chemistry or of mutation. If you could understand that, the mutation of one element into another would passionately interest you, earth into water, water into fire, fire into air, and so forth. These words are the keys to studying what takes place in us at different densities of being.

One of the means used is voluntary detachment. The only true detachment is a spontaneous result and not an effort. It can be compared to the scales that fall by themselves from the skin of a snake; the snake does nothing. Likewise the bark of certain trees cracks and falls off when the trunk grows thicker. The same phenomenon takes place in the inner being after the digestion of an integrated experience. The experience itself disappears like a good meal. The nourishment is distributed throughout the body according to a known process, which we shall not speak of here. What applies to food applies also to a lived experience; if it is perfectly integrated, there is no more to be said about it. It is quickly forgotten, but the inner being has grown.

If I speak of God, it is because I do not know who God is, what God is. He who speaks about something is outside of that thing. The only truth is the radiation of the being in living silence. But it is easy to be mistaken, for in the "return" to life, he who knows is as mute as a stone. The Great Manu advises us to be silent. He who questions is not conscious of his heaviness; he who is silent is conscious of the transmuting ferment that dwells within him.

He who, without wishing it, without even thinking about it, brings about a transmutation in the being of people around him, has a power attributed in the old days to the philosopher's stone. He is the ferment of an integrated expe-

rience. In the course of this process, the disciple must be patient and calm like a fisherman on the water's edge. The fisherman has cast his line; the disciple has opened his heart. What will appear comes from the depths of the water or from the depths of the heart. Neither one nor the other knows what it will be. To be ready is the only thing that counts. This waiting causes the disciple to die to those who are around him.

It is not a question of an experience which can be repeated. To try to repeat it would be committing a great mistake which could be fatal, for it would mean wilfully engaging the ego in the play of powers and cosmic forces without being prepared to control them.

The traditional Schools speak of yogic experiences: meetings and contacts (*darśan*) with a saint, revelation, discipline for the mind, the heart, the body, life in an ashram, and so forth. All these experiences are at our disposal. They give us our chance. They have been tried by others before us, and we can rely on them according to our individual type.

These experiences can fill a life. Nevertheless, they are only the careful tilling of naturally fertile ground, which must take place before a single true sensation is felt within and can be incarnated. This sensation is the seed of life because it is entirely pure. It creates and then disappears. Its role is ended. The child to be born is potentially the embryo in the matrix of the inner being, which will one day be "the Man whose seat is in the cavern of the heart." There is no mystery in this. One faces reality here.

If the spirit can become malleable matter and matter made malleable can become spirit, spiritual experience will demonstrate that it can transform the behaviour of the individual. This transformation — spirit-matter and matter-spirit — is, in fact, true spiritual existentialism, the consciousness of *sat*. But in times of danger and depression, when the passions reign that characterize the present vital plane, the human hunger represented in the West by existentialism has

degraded the perspective of pure Existence (*sat*).

In every spiritual discipline one progresses first with thought, then with speech. The body follows only very slowly. Then only can one speak of total surrender. To establish a discipline that engages all the functions of the body is long and difficult because the body is heavy and asleep. In the life of the world, the body is made use of first. It is educated and given all kinds of habits until its behaviour is considered satisfactory.

Most people know nothing about the internal sense organs (*indriyas*). The internal organ of thought has nothing in common with habitual thoughts turned toward the outside. It is used very rarely. The internal organ of speech is still more rarely used. Interiorized life uses only the internal sense organs, which have a double function, that of relating us to outer life and of bringing to us impressions to be stored. To recognize the functioning of these inner organs involves very careful work on oneself.

Certain Laws must not be revealed before a long preparation has given them weight. It is solely direct experience that will bring their substance to life and demonstrate their existence. These Laws are part of the interiorized experience, of the substance of life that has been "sucked" from the Void; it can be neither eaten nor drunk, it can only be absorbed into oneself.

Here are some fragments about it. There is a saying, "Take a broom and sweep in front of you." On the philosophical plane, this means: "Separate yourself from prakriti." Part of yourself is passive and remains calm and unmoved; the other part is active, in movement, constantly acting and reacting.

We see a dog chained to his kennel and barking, but the dog itself does not know that it barks. It is only fulfilling the function for which it is there. Animals have consciousness, but not self-consciousness. The heart of the problem

that interests us is the following: "Have an eye open on yourself, observe yourself!" In life you are, in fact, like the barking watchdog; you are always watching *others*, but you never look at yourself with the same keenness.

Another way to formulate this idea is the following: One man smokes opium, absorbed in his experience; another smokes without being intoxicated because he measures what he does. Still another remains indifferent while he smokes. He feels nothing because he functions like an automaton. He is the image of sleep in a waking state where there are even no reactions.

In your efforts of self-observation you are often stopped at a point where you are unable to formulate concretely what appears to you as objective. If you knew how to do it, you would experience bliss and pure joy (*ānanda*). But as yet you have only a few rare memories of such moments which, although vivid, quickly disappear. To taste this bliss in the essence of the being would make you independent. At that point one is virtually separated from *prakṛiti*. That is why intoxication is the oldest form of worship, which is a bliss of remembrance no longer bound by time.

One must know how to pass consciously to the plane of pure sensation. To achieve this, one must learn to orient oneself between two kinds of memory (*smṛtis*): memory of an event and memory of the essence that has been recognized. One of these memories is changeable, the other permanent. Memories of the event exist only in time. As long as they remain, one is either happy or distressed, according to their nature. As soon as a sensation is associated with them, they become a limitation, that is to say, "what is finished" or "what is lost."

A pure memory is never a sensation, but the delight of having touched a "point." Hence the importance of pure things: what lies around us, what we hear and see, what we eat and breathe. Only pure memories lead to eternal memory, in which the impressions of life (*saṁskāras*) are effaced. One touches here a state of deep spiritual existentialism

which is the eternal present. But every time one speaks about it, one destroys something of the power that is in action, for instead of interiorizing it, one exteriorizes it. That is why a Master who has accepted the task of teaching is sacrificing himself. He acts according to a descending Law. The substance of the experience that he enables others to approach is like the foetus in a pregnant woman. The Master watches over the experience without imagining the form that it will take.

The greatest mistake we can make is to believe that we can direct our actions, whereas all we can do is to feel the repercussions and reactions to which they give rise. One attitude, however, is possible, namely, that of forgetting the action as and when it is in progress. The result will be like a blank page in which memories will no longer leave an imprint.

A Buddhist discipline suggests, "Do not attach the passing moment to another moment;" that is to say, disconnect the moments from each other. Of what use is it to connect them? Live like the child holding a toy in his hand. He gives it with a smile to one person and refuses it to another.

If one studies the life of Shāṅkaracharya in his mystical period, one sees that a great saint never acts according to his own will, but according to the will of others who sometimes are fools. This means to act without creating inner reaction. In this state of freedom, the true creative urge arises. You will serve better, you will participate in the life of others, and you can heartily laugh at yourself!

There exists a philosophy of forgetting; practice it! The Nyaya School teaches, "From a lower prakriti, aspire to reach a higher Prakriti. To attain this, free yourself from past relationships; throw away your memories, which weigh so heavily. When fed by prakriti, your memories are stale food. Throw them into the Ganges, which has a strong current, but not into a pond, where they would decay without being destroyed."

In the way of love (*bhakti*), observation of oneself remains

fully conscious of the movements of human nature even when they are violent; but in the way of knowledge the observation of oneself is freed in the stage of interiorization where the essence of being is nourished only by very subtle foods (*prāṇa*). In this new state of consciousness, there is no longer any suffering arising from prakriti because the clear consciousness is now inhabited only by the spirit of Purusha.

Observation of oneself can only be directed by a Master who knows his disciple well and will help him to see his problems. The work of interiorization is perfectly codified by Patanjali, who in his aphorisms gives a detailed plan of work. But it remains up to the Master, who knows his student's type and sees his possibilities, to apply this discipline.

Patanjali specifies the following states:

1. A personal discipline that leads to quietening the body.
2. A state of consciousness in which calm has been established but the subconscious continues to work.
3. The mastery of tendencies and habits that reappear one after the other at long intervals.
4. A victory over any tendency or habit, giving a taste of freedom that can be called illumination, even if it is partial and ephemeral.

Follow these simple and sure rules of conduct. Be silent as to the results and pass on crumbs of knowledge only to those nourished by the same blood as yourself, who are not prone to bitter criticisms and fault finding. Avoid those who pride themselves on their strength, for it serves only the lower prakriti. You are never obliged to participate in the life of someone who is not one of your co-disciples or a spiritual son of your Guru.

With the Master, be simple. Learn to have integrity. Serve him without asking questions, in complete surrender, but without any emotion.

Patanjali gives the psychological foundations¹ resulting from the experience of centuries and suggests two formulas:

1. Relax all the joints, which activates inner relaxation.

¹ See *Commentaries on the Aphorisms of Patanjali (Raja-Yoga)*.

At that moment there is a feeling of being wholly at one with the earth. From this comes the deep physical joy of having a harmonious body.

2. Only with a global sensation of the whole body can one begin to observe the breath, which goes outwards, whereas it is in fact the force of inner life.

If we try to observe in this way, without giving rise to the least tension or alteration, whether in thought, or in feeling, or in the body, it is possible to follow the movement of the breath and to isolate oneself in the body as in an impregnable citadel. Seat yourself in a natural way. This will be your ideal posture (*āsana*). Observe your breathing while allowing it to establish its own rhythm. Discover calmly whether this rhythm is introverted or extroverted, that is, whether you naturally keep your breath inside or whether the breath stops for a moment after breathing out. Then breathe normally through both nostrils. To begin with, the breathing has no rhythm. Later a rhythm becomes established provided one does not interfere.

In the beginning, the breathing is only physical, but little by little the rhythm deepens and will go down to the body's centre of gravity, making it vibrate internally. There is a rule that says, "The mind is the master of the activities of the senses, but the breathing governs the mind."



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AUTOMATISM

The Law of automatism is absolute. Even if the role of this Law is to keep the masses bound to the will of prakriti, it forces the man who is a seeker by nature to find a way out and awaken to his own being.

To achieve this several things are required:

1. An active meditative state in all the circumstances of life, that is, to become the witness of oneself in the midst of life.

2. A voluntary withdrawal from the mental functions, in which, by association of ideas, most reactions arise.

3. A conscious self-control to curb all greed.

4. A woman can reach this awakening state through "natural intelligence," that is, through her essence, whereas a man can reach it only through voluntary sacrifice and personal discipline. There is no other way for him.

It is said that a hundred thousand seekers will come to nothing for each one who will reach the goal, just as in Great Nature an immense surplus of seeds is required for one to bear fruit. All the wasted seeds go to make good humus for the earth. All the disciples who come to nothing make up the spiritual atmosphere of India. Hindus do not discuss either their attempts or their failures in this domain. For them all movements coming from the ego have the same value; all of them spring from distorted impulses. Hence every good action performed by one's own will still belongs to the realm of personality.

Ideas and sensations are as automatic as everything else. They can be counted and classified; their frequency can be known. They are only figures and lines forming triangles with unequal sides. One has to know about that rhythm of life.

Life rolls on like a stream carrying along much refuse in its swift current. We need not haul it ashore, but rather to let it float along and disappear.

To appreciate rightly Shri Ramakrishna's childhood vision of infinity on seeing white cranes flying across the sky, or the force of ecstasy that led Shri Ramana Maharshi to the Void, one must have felt deeply in oneself the continuous pressure that Hindu society can exert on a sensitive being, imposed upon him by the rules dictated by the caste, the family and the village, from which there is no way out.

These extremely rigid conditions cause beings ready to throw off the yoke to "explode," just as the pressure of the earth causes one seed in a thousand to burst open within it. Each tree, indeed, is a miracle of persistent effort to survive in the midst of multiple dangers. This effort is a movement of the essence, still incoherent but already prepared to pay the price of independence.

Do not leave your souls in the hands of the temple priests, but become your own architects and lay the foundations of a solid structure in which everything will be in its place. It is by progressively studying our reactions to shocks from outside that we can measure our progress and see what remains shaky in ourselves.

The only way to recognize your real "I" is to see your reactions in detail, one after the other. That is the surest guide for penetrating toward the inner being. The duration of a reaction clearly seen is the only moment when mind and matter, soul and body are not cut off from each other. It is a moment of your own reality.

If we knew how to expand ourselves to the utmost in time and space, nothing would be difficult and the complexities of life would disappear. Life itself would carry them, in other words the Divine Mother, or the Void, which is the first cause of prakriti. Each one individually does what he can on his own level of understanding. This idea is the generator of all upward flight as well as of all degradation.

We can ask the question, "Why do I exist?" One of the customary answers is that we exist because of the Law of cause and effect (*karma*).

India believes in successive births. This belief is acknowl-

edged and repeated to the point where it is devoid of thought and meaning. He who lives with no trace of awakened consciousness will be reborn on the same plane of evolution, even as the tree, on its plane, is reborn as a tree. It is matter and will remain matter in the admirably organized recurrence of prakriti. Well, one can voluntarily ignore the idea of *karma*, in spite of all the philosophical explanations given about the relation of cause to effect, coming from former lives and influencing future lives; but what cannot be ignored are the different categories of impressions (*samskāras*) and the shocks coming from outside which are constantly reaching us. We live on these impressions as on the air we breathe and the food we absorb. We must learn to recognize these impressions, to welcome them or to reject them. An exact science is involved here, in which the influence of the mother, of the father, and then of the Guru is of the highest importance.

The man who penetrates willingly into the plane of evolution thus creates impressions related to it, which then accumulate. Because of this he enters within the evolutionary will. Then ensues a definite rhythm of births and deaths (*samsāras*) until the substances utilized are refined and purified. The level of consciousness changes at each stage, for many degrees of perception mark out the path of evolution. New words come to be used related to alchemy and physics, for it is easier to speak of a scientific event than of an inner attitude in which the subjectivity is involved and therefore alters every objective observation.

The *Upanishads* affirm that every soul is not reincarnated since reincarnation presupposes a conscious maturity.

VIII

CONSCIOUSNESS

Even the adepts of Samkhya discuss the origin of consciousness, just as much as the philosophers do: Buddhist, Vedantist, and all others.

Truth, like life itself, is a mystery. It can be recognized, but it cannot be analysed nor imprisoned in words. In this realm, all experiences lived must move imperceptibly from the plane of outer life to the plane of inner life to nourish that which is our essence. Then some day these experiences will find expression in their own way by a particular radiation. This radiation is also automatic; it moves from the plane of inner life to that of outer life.

To be oneself, that is to say, to live in the consciousness of one's own essence, promotes the growth of a new understanding. It is just as if delicate fingers were unfolding, one by one, the petals of a lotus.

Between the spasmodic movements of the finite and the immobility of the infinite flows a continuous stream of the force of *śakti*. This is the process of becoming. It can be said that the force of *śakti* is continuous, since it can be perceived as such by consciousness. But if you believe that it is unconscious, its movement will be for you only a succession of jerking dots and all things will then have a beginning and an end.

But consciousness, even at the mental level, demands continuity. It lives by duration. And duration is not a blank word. This idea is at the root of the Vedic conception of reality as pure Existence (*satyam*), the rhythm of time (*rtam*), and constant growth (*brhat*). What is most important is the link between *satyam* and *rtam*. This is the fundamental Law of spiritual evolution.

By being conscious of oneself it is possible to pass from the plane of personality to the plane of essence, for an obser-

ver is then present. The *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita* indicate different means, each one representing fragments of discipline:

1. To observe oneself with a sustained look.
2. To stand aside, without any kind of judgment whatsoever, thus allowing the essence to grow.
3. A neutral look will automatically see the disorder that reigns in the inner house; then a desire for order will arise of itself.
4. A growing essence always gives its assent.
5. The essence will become 'the one that carries everything in its arms,' and prakriti will follow obediently, and finally find its own place in all functions.
6. The Lord in the heart will always in the end conquer prakriti.

Between the two different levels in a being in search of himself there is always an empty space to be crossed, which provokes a chaotic movement; the more protracted the effort to cross the gap, the more violent the movement becomes.

The intermediate consciousness which opens up the way to pass from one centre to another is made of very fluid matter. It is in the heart of this matter that the Guru works deeply with his ploughshare. This fluid matter has no connection either with the subject or with the object, it will find its own form in the Void. It can be activated only by the Master. For a long time, the seeker himself knows nothing about it. He has no organ with which to discover it or make use of it.

In this position, the disciple's attitude is to do nothing of his own free will, for then everything would be distorted. But he must observe with lucidity, of his level of understanding, all that takes place, and learn to recognize that 'active passivity' which will become a right movement at the appropriate time. This is all that concerns him.

As regards the states through which Shri Ramakrishna passed in order to come back to a normal state of conscious-

ness after a long period of *samādhi*, he said of himself, "Since the ego never dies, let it at least become a good servant of the Divine Mother!" To come out of ecstasy, when he still felt impelled to go further into his experience, he used to strike himself violently on the head. He said, "One can sing an ascending scale: *sā, ri, gā, mā, pā, dhā, ni...* but one cannot hold the last note for long. One has to come down again!" He had an immense wish to live, to have the whole universe enter the field of his experience. He saw life in its aspect of completeness in *śakti*, the life of the cosmic Laws, and he absorbed it to the very limit.

Every disciple in his quest is fully aware that the personal discipline he has accepted has a practical aim, which is the complete union of human consciousness with the highest reality. The goal is to transform the mental, vital, and even the physical nature of the being, down to the smallest cells in the body, in order to attain to the understanding of the ultimate reality (*Shiva-śakti*).

The extreme relativity of consciousness must never be forgotten. Those who have a highly developed personality are less easily penetrated by a new form of consciousness.

Every morning wake up, each one of you, like a young child. At noon, stand majestically as men and women in full development. In the evening, be conscious beings ripened in strength and serenity, who having drunk deep at the fountain of life, watch the approach of death. In the middle of the night, be the Void itself, the darkness of the sky in which a moon ray still shines. In this picture, I am revealing to you the secret of the *Gayatri*¹ of the *Vedas*, the essence of the Sun and the Law of life.

¹The invocation which is pronounced every morning.

SENSATIONS

All spiritual experiences correspond to sensations in the body. They are simply a closely graded series of different sensations, beginning with that of feeling oneself as heavy as a clod of earth and passing gradually, in full consciousness, to the sensation of liquidity and then to that of the emanation of heat. The last sensation is that of a global vibration before reaching the Void. The road to be travelled is indeed very long.

Each time a step is made on the ascending ladder, a sensation of expansion in space and of complete relaxation is experienced. This sensation offers a foretaste of what the experience of pure spirit (*cit*) might be, in which all things are transcended. At that moment spirit and matter appear to be one. But how far one is from that! This conception comes from an ancient theory of the purification of the elements, which in the *Tantras* is called *bhūta-śuddhi* and which has been spoken of in the *Upanishads*.

May your present discipline become for you, in this subtle gradation of sensations, a means for expansion and later for infiltration into everything around you, both fellow beings and things. Become aware of the deep and strong sensation of passing from one element to another. There is no other means. Use for this purpose the solitude that makes it possible to interiorize many forces. Every contraction produces heat and it is this heat that will spread. A true personal discipline (*tapasyā*) is nothing other than this expansion of one's self radiating warmth produced by inner concentration.

Always remember that any sensation of expansion you may experience is a radiation. Remain calm and radiate this warmth. Do not question. Ask for nothing more. Live these moments to the full. This radiation is in itself *śakti*, an instant of living consciousness, that is, a direct experience

that becomes established in you. Your sensation is the proof of it, a certainty you can no longer efface from your memory.

In meditation, the whole body is utilized to discover a sensation of expansion which, for a long time, represents the final aim. Work on the body is a delicate matter and has to be done according to very precise rules whereby each movement, voluntary or involuntary, is a search for calm, that is to say, for a sensation of physical consciousness.

The first objective to reach is perfect solidity of the motionless body. To arrive at that, all thoughts have to be brought back one after another to the body — to its form, its weight, its balance, etc. There must be no other thought. This state is symbolized by the matter "earth," in the heart of which, notwithstanding its heaviness and opacity, a vibration already exists.

The directed attention will gradually be fixed upon the image of a bowl. The body is really a vessel made of heavy matter which contains an effervescent wine. Concentrated in itself, attention will penetrate the body, go down the length of the spinal column until an impression of great heaviness is felt in the centre of gravity. The whole body has then become as hard as a statue with a pure form.¹

At this point, one discovers that all the inner movements: effervescence, agitation, ideas, images — all are produced by the body. The stability of the body is a state in itself. This is why, to attain it more easily, so much importance is attached to food and hygiene.

The second stage begins when the body, in its well-established solidity, can become the matrix of energy in movement. Externally hard, the body becomes internally the very pulsation of the life that fills it. An intense vibration of energy throbs in it. This state is symbolized by purification of the element water, that is to say, by the passage from a heavier to a lighter density.

Then comes the discovery that an irradiant body of

¹ Valmiki, who in this state of solidity of the body is said to have been covered with white ants.

extremely fine nervous sensations is contained within the body of flesh. It is only when the body of flesh has acquired a solid form that the nerve channels (*nāḍis*) can be revealed with all the sensations of the currents of life running through them. As it is pictured in the *Vedas*: "...the waters of a stream can pass through a rock."

The third stage occurs when all the currents of nervous energy flowing through the inner body become currents of light, from which little by little a sensation of fire emanates. This state is symbolized by the purification of the element fire, so much so that the temperature of the body rises as in an attack of fever.

These three stages; the state of solidity of the body, the state of the sensation of the nervous currents, the state of the sensation of currents of light, are characteristic of meditation in depth. Up to this point, the individuality remains intact, described by the words: "one of the many."

The fourth stage is that in which individuality is lost. This state of sensation of fire which consumes the body is a further passage from a heavier to a more subtle density. The fire that consumes the inner body consumes at the same time all sense of form, to the degree that the sensation of non-form becomes irradiant. This state is symbolized by the purification of the element air. The habitual impulse to resort to forms disappears. There remains only the state of the Void, which is at the same time a precise and global sensation of multiformity. All is clarity and calm.

Meditation is in fact laboratory work and an attack directed against prakṛiti in order to escape from her slavery.

There are different spiritual densities owing to which the inner being can become fluid and discover what is beyond the form of his habitual being. He can thus come in contact with beings belonging to the densities he has discovered. But any kind of emotion interrupts this process. Emotion is always an identification that prevents any movement of surface expansion and any movement of interiorization in

depth, whereas one of the most subtle aspects of knowledge is the passage from one density to another.

It is true that the *yogis* of certain disciplines are able to feed themselves at a distance with fluid elements and with the vital elements of the air. This is no miracle; it is simply a question of expansion and of the capacity to assimilate one or another kind of food.

In *prakriti* there are many degrees and levels of expansion. God, the Creator, and the soul, while being the very finest parts of *prakriti*, are nevertheless materialities, even if they are fluid. A human being has infinite possibilities of expansion; he can even approach the objective Will, which is of an entirely different order from that of the habitual will. The objective Will can be ascertained and felt as though a hand is striking you in the face.

Those who work on themselves generally proceed by intermittent leaps after having received one or more shocks from life that have awakened them or after having been in fearful danger.

In a moment of inner calmness, one can gradually, as if coming out of a dream, learn to catch the last impression received and observe it without losing it. The effort to try is to isolate the sensation provoked by the impression received and trace that sensation back to the centre where it arose. One sees what provoked it. In this attempt, the slightest discussion with oneself, or the slightest fear, curiosity, or judgment, will instantly blot out the given contents of the problem.

This observation can be verified in the course of morning dreams. A useful attempt is to wake up gently and to follow the indications just given, knowing that the whole being does not dream. One centre at a time is exteriorized in dreaming; usually it is the emotional centre. Only those in whom an active consciousness is already highly developed, dream with the whole of their being, but such a dream is no longer a dream; it belongs to another state of consciousness.

To penetrate into that realm of consciousness, sensation

is the only guide we have, a continuous sensation which, whether it almost disappears or stays with us in a subtle way, can no longer be felt in our body. This sensation is nevertheless connected with the inner organs of perception, whose role and use are not yet known to us.

How to keep this sensation of oneself alive during sleep? The first effort to try is to go to sleep consciously, remaining aware of a very subtle sensation of the self. This sensation will persist far beyond the ordinary stage of consciousness which falls into the heaviness of sleep. This sensation is really a vibration of life of which the process is precisely known. On waking, the reverse process takes place. To animate the sensation of the Self the vibration of life will unfold itself long before the body awakens.

How to connect these two moments of sensation of the self, separated by the sleep of the body? In this realm nothing can be willed. The progressive refining of the heavy matters in us will allow us to discover, one after another, the inner organs (*indriyas*) of perception whose functioning is indicated here.

When we try to control to some extent the impressions coming to us from outside and the sensations they create in us, it is important not to allow more than one sensation at a time to pervade us, one that is identifiable. We may then be able to detect its colour, a taste, a smell and sound, and finally a certain tangibility in it. At that moment, we shall know exactly where it comes from and how to evaluate it.

The co-existence of several sensations creates, through comparisons and judgements, an interest and an attachment and a certain confusion, which are inevitable.

To learn to discriminate as objectively as possible entails an all-round work on the whole being in which nothing is left in the dark. At that moment one knows why one lives, one discovers the meaning of Life within life and one's own place in the harmony of a great Law. Each conquest means

peace or enlightenment on one's own level of consciousness until that level is surpassed. No haste. The conscientious seeker goes from deep obscurity to a lesser obscurity. He speaks by negations, but these negations are positive. If the road is long, great patience is required.

What is a true spiritual discipline? It is a recognized rhythm of the harmonized body. All is there. Nothing could be more material than to use the body for acquiring a right sensation of God. Hence the many customs and the caste taboos regulating relationships between people, in order to prepare for the harmonious union of an awakened body with consciousness and with the eternal Prakriti. Through spiritual discipline the entire body becomes the receptacle of divine sensations. A well-conducted discipline makes it possible to identify and recognize at his base a unique sensation which is a sensation of the universe. What is known as meditation is the interiorization of this "pure sensation" outside of time. It is a taste of eternity.

Discipline, that is to say, voluntary sacrifice, is the unique means to reverse the vital current which is habitually directed outward by the mind. From this come all the images which picture the disciple going against the current of vital fluid to go back up to the source, just as, on the concrete plane, thousands of pilgrims go upstream against the current of the Ganges to its source.

As a matter of fact a Master said: I am contradicting myself when I speak to you of discipline, for I always insist that every one of you should emphasize and thus intensify his own motive for searching. The whole thing is to have a very definite motive of research as the pivot around which your attempt will be organized. People often come to me and say, "I would like to meditate, for example, on a flame, a triangle, a luminous spot. What do you advise?" In this case I answer, "Well then, meditate on your body. Try to find a right sensation of yourself!"

A right sensation of oneself is in the very nature of incarnation, of penetration. At that moment, the spirit becomes

matter and takes on a definite density in the body. Personal austerity (*tapasyā*) is the process by which a sensation comes alive, so that the whole body glows. This is a true sensation, that of the spirit becoming flesh.

This state in which no thought enters is experienced as an intense bodily joy (*ānanda*), for in the state of awakened consciousness it is a matter of a very precise global sensation, a wholeness. There we are touching the hidden secret of Buddhism.

The experience of a pure sensation in the physical body is in the realm of the nerve channels (*nāḍis*), which allow the vibrations perceived to penetrate into the physical body. They are extremely fine substances.

This leads us to the realm of music, to the study of auditory sensation, which is at the origin of the musical scale. The intervals with their variations of vibrations determine the notes; it is not the notes that determine the intervals. The same succession of irregular intervals occurs in everything manifested. Brahma himself creates in accordance with a rhythm that has its own vibration. An incalculable and chaotic movement underlies all cosmic order.

Between notes there are intervals of varying lengths, the particularities of which are known. Make the following experiment: concentrate on any one musical note and feel in yourself the modulation of the note and the length of its vibrations. The low notes resound at the base of the spinal column, the middle ones in the region of the heart and the high notes in the head.

Although the music and notation of the *Samaveda* have been lost, the notion has survived that the human organism as a whole represents different levels of consciousness obeying the same rules of modulation and frequency of sound. Each note is in itself a pure Sound (*nāda*) and pure Joy (*ānanda*) with different vibrations. Along the spinal column there are eight circuits of nerve experiences. The vibrations vary according to the movement of the sun. For that reason

there are special songs for the short moment immediately preceding the dawn (*bhairava*) and for the moment of dawn itself (*bhairavi*). Chaitanya¹ used to pass from one ecstasy to another when he heard the name of God being sung. One of his companions who was always with him composed some well-known melodies based on his lamentations and pleadings with the Divine.

An orthodox swami, going through a village, paused in front of a poor mud house. Somebody was laughing, somebody was singing. The swami, being curious, went nearer and at the door held out his bowl. He saw a woman feeding her children. There were five of them: four beautiful children and a fifth. The fifth was the Child-Krishna, a statuette made of wood and plaster such as are sold in the markets. The mother was making little balls of rice and putting them into one mouth after another. The Child-Krishna was receiving his share and this was why they were all laughing.

"What are you doing?" cried the swami. "How do you dare to play with the Lord Krishna and give him that unclean food which goes from mouth to mouth? What sacrilege!" Frightened, the woman prostrated herself at the monk's feet. "My lord swami," she said, "I did not mean to do wrong. My children are so happy to play with Shri Krishna. He is their companion. If I have offended the Supreme, how can I be pardoned? Please help me!"

"Give me that statuette," said the monk severely, "I will take it to the village temple, where the Lord Krishna will be bathed and worshipped rightly and treated with respect instead of being used as a plaything. You will visit him when bringing your offerings to the priests!"

The children were upset. They were losing their friend. The mother wept for shame. She wrapped up the statuette

¹ A celebrated reformer and monk in Bengal (1485-1531). He himself was neither a poet nor a musician, but he inspired his disciples in such a way that over three centuries thousands of devotional songs were composed in Bengal.

and gave it to the swami. He carried it to the temple and told the priests what he had seen. They were outraged. But the same night the swami could not go to sleep. Suddenly the Lord Krishna appeared to him in all his glory. "What have you done?" he said to the monk. "I was so happy at that woman's house! I loved the devotion of her heart and her laughter, and now you have shut me up in a dark temple. Listen, I will not eat anything more nor accept any offerings whatever until you take me back to her. Her rice was cooked just right and that is the rice I want, no other!"

Sacred images (*mūrti*) of gods and goddesses have two aspects. The first is the philosophical aspect of a principle, the projection of an idea (*tattva mūrti*). By his devotion, the devotee is supposed to go beyond the image and the symbol it expresses. Then he discovers the second aspect, which is the sensation arising from the principle that gives life to the image (*bhāva mūrti*). This sensation is the passage of the idea in becoming life.

A Hindu will say, "What does it mean to me, the idea of an Absolute, of the inconceivable Brahman?" I do not want to worship a reflection of light. What I want is to contemplate the Divine and worship him in my own way. It is not the impersonal Lord Krishna in his sublime glory who fills my heart, but rather Krishna the Child, who steals butter, plays the flute and plays all sorts of tricks."

In this way the majestic attributes of the *tattva mūrti* are transformed into naïve simplicity to feed a true sentiment of the heart. The culmination of every spiritual discipline is this precise sensation in oneself of divine love. One must know how to make use of the force and grandeur of philosophy, but in the heart, know how to feed oneself on radiant beauty alone.

¹ The Absolute, the impersonal God.

EMOTIONS

An absolute rule in Samkhya is never to speak about one's emotions. To display sorrow is only to provoke an inner movement of prakriti instead of going voluntarily towards a possible transformation of the emotion.

Here are three practical rules which, when they work together, are the basis of a state in which emotion loses its destructive power:

1. To utilize for oneself the fewest possible things, which creates a freedom of space.

2. To have no hope in the future, which gives consistency to the present and creates a freedom in time.

3. To die consciously every evening, which means a new birth each morning on awakening and an inner freedom.

To render life objective, two fundamental attitudes are needed, namely:

1. A centring of consciousness around the axis of the higher Will — which involves an attentive vigilance of the whole being, in its movements and functions.

2. In the face of prakriti, adopting consciously the attitude of a child. This attitude dissolves obstacles. The child is renewed by himself through elemental impressions, earth, water, fire, air, ether, the beauty of a face, the intonation of a voice, a profound look, etc.

Each one of us should say to himself:

“As long as ‘my’ prakriti does not grasp these two ways of becoming alert in the midst of the great Prakriti, there will always be all sorts of reactions: inertia, breakdowns, fixations, or other forms of psychic suffering.

“All conscious work coming from the inner being is a direct attack on the power of ‘my’ prakriti and also on the power of the great Prakriti. An ineluctable progression connects them. The greater the inner effort, the stronger my prakriti's defence of itself becomes and the bigger are the

obstacles set up by the great Prakriti. But remember that in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna says on the battlefield: 'If I reveal to you such a secret about Prakriti do not repeat it. If you speak, you will be stoned.' "

Emotions constantly make us mistake the path for the goal and vice versa. And they are not the same! If you want to climb to the top of a mountain, do not lose yourself in sentimental ramblings about its beauty. It is better to look for a clearly marked path that will take you to the top from the spot where you are standing.

If one does not give any value, positive or negative, to emotions, one is in the presence of a motor that makes use of prakriti only at its habitual speed. Water in a test tube is a form of heavy matter. As steam, the same matter, while taking up more space, is also more aerated. In the same way, a human being can suffer from emotions as heavy as stones in his heart, or else from emotions that have become more subtle, and while still existing allow light to show through.

Try to understand that a well sustained objective attention, as well as a thorough self-observation, can destroy the process of reflection about oneself, that is to say, the emotion itself. What remains beyond emotion must be observed with the greatest care, for the purity towards which one is tending is a state difficult to describe. It is the state of pure Existence (*sat*).

It is unthinkable that a teacher should be impatient, for he knows that there will never be any change in prakriti, whether it happens to be rigid or pliable, even if one is vigilant or even if by sustained attention one could touch and taste a state that is the Absolute. Alas, this "any one," according to the *Bhagavad Gita*, means *one* in a million!

Psychoanalysis works on the intensive aspects of emotions. They are brought out into the daylight with the object of cleaning out the subconscious, and are thus lived over again, which means that each of them is amplified. Instead of belonging only to the damaged part of the being, they

invade the whole field of prakriti as weeds spread through a wheatfield.

The very structure of emotion should be denied as such, for it arises only from one's subjective view of external elements. It is for this reason that, as is the case in the traditional technique of the Buddhist analysis, the control of negative emotions must be methodically practised. It is one of the essential bases of inner balance which vaguely exists partly disengaged from the heavy sleep of prakriti. This sleep with its weight of ignorance is an admirably organised automatism of Great Nature.

The traditional techniques pay no attention to emotion. Even the worshippers of Krishna, who make full use of emotion in their fundamental attitude of adoration, use only those sublimated elements of emotion that sustain the ideal,

Several levels have to be passed through before one can know how to minimize emotion at its very source, to recognize it, to isolate and to master it, so as finally to be able to get rid of it. The lower stage is to realize once and for all that an emotion is a debt to be paid — which is the beginning of a process that uproots it. This is the process of eradication. The second stage is to conceive of emotion as something to be abandoned or as a recognized recurrence. It is part of the automatism which becomes apparent but has no real existence. The third stage is that in which the light form of an ideal is voluntarily and methodically put in the place of the heavy form of an emotion which is oppressive.

There are many classical examples of circles around a Master in which the disciples know only the heavy form of an emotion and therefore interpret on their own level what is lived by the Master in front of them. For instance, Shri Ramakrishna said one day, "Where is God? He is there!" and he pointed to his breast. Shri Ramakrishna was speaking from the deepest state of interiorization, but his disciples, who in their personal discipline were still at the stage of the

heavy form of emotions, therefore deified the man who was speaking to them. Nevertheless, they faithfully observed the intellectual part of the process.

These three stages in regard to emotion are admirably illustrated by the story of the "madwoman of Calcutta." About twenty years ago in a residential section of the city, people used to see a very young and beautiful woman stopping passers-by on the sidewalk in front of her house and asking them, "Where is Shyama Babu? Have you seen him? If you tell me where he is, I will go and fetch him." Her beloved was dead and she was still waiting for him, living from her love of him. And love had betrayed her. The passers-by played cruel tricks on her.

Then another phase began for her. She clung to young men as they were going by and said to them, "You are my Shyama Babu, you have come back...." Since she was not a prostitute, these men drove her away and ill-treated her, even threw stones at her.

After several years, one of her neighbours who had known her in the past noticed her sitting all day long at the foot of the sacred tree of that district. She had aged but her face was radiant with joy. She recognized her neighbour. He asked her, "Have you found your Shyama?" "Yes," she replied with a lovely smile. "Look, there he is...." and she pointed to her breast.

Renunciation (*vairāgya*), in a very precise sense, is the voluntary giving up of all emotions whatsoever. This notion, supported by long tradition, goes hand in hand with life. To be capable of mastering an emotion, one has first to evaluate and consider it for what it really is, the distortion of an uncontrolled and misplaced sensation.

When the intestines are out of order, one must follow a strict diet. The cure comes about by abstaining for the time being at least from certain foods. Thus the body regains vigour. Psychically, power is restored. This method is the opposite of psychoanalysis, which digs about in the ego. Samkhya places you under a cosmic force and is interested

in the ego only to say: "Why are you afraid of this or that? All these things are only movements of prakriti, aspects of the recurrences which concern men, animals, and the whole of Great Nature." One must learn to live in the very movement that shapes and moulds our prakriti, without trying to escape from it. To look at prakriti as a whole and see its agitated movement makes it possible not to identify with it. I observe what goes on. By doing this, I feel the movement in myself, but I do not linger on the fact that I was created in the same way. In this discipline the element time plays an important role, as well as patience. On the part of the Guru this patience is pure love.

Emotion does not enter into any spiritual discipline because in itself it has no steadiness. It is only a moment of Prakriti. When the mind is perfectly calm it is like the still water of a mountain lake. The slightest ripple on the surface is an emotion.

What happens to it? If Purusha allows this ripple, however slight, to intensify and become a wave, he himself will be swallowed. Blind emotion is then the master of the situation, although in fact it has no *raison d'être*.

If this emotion, while it is still only a ripple, is voluntarily interiorized, then little by little, because of its lack of consistency, it will disintegrate of itself and go back to whence it came, being nothing but a shining ray of beatitude (*ānanda*).

KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge, even partial, is in constant contradiction with the practical facts of daily life. Even those who are at least partly aware of this are unable to move in a straight line, because they go from shock to shock in the midst of contradictions which unceasingly create reactions.

For behind every contradiction there is this irresistible something that impels us forward and that can only be approached by an extension of oneself, as a river in flood spreads its water over the land without losing sight of its bed.

To progress on the path of knowledge, you have wholly to live your truth of the moment. This truth will purify itself in your integrity. What matters most is to have a global sensation of yourself. In this way you can see what is taking place in you and know whether you are living according to your own truth. But it would be a mistake to speak about it. All you can do is to irradiate this experience.

There comes a time when a transposition must take place because a new Law is in question here. Don't interfere; otherwise all the explanations you give yourself will distort your vision. No one can bear the rigorous and absolute detachment of Purusha; that is why Prakriti has so many intermediate truths to offer. Once you have created unity in yourself, there will only be one Truth, even if it seems very far off.

Only a very few will enter the esoteric circle of knowledge, which is like an "armour of steel," for the divine power is intensely active there. At that time it is no longer a question of activity or non-activity, because he who lives in sensation sees God in everything; forms appear only to express an idea.

A time will come when two or three hundred families, each with two or three children, will live wholly in accordance with the science of inner life. The great mass of huma-

nity will disappear or serve solely as a ground for those who know. What will take place will again be the phenomenon of castes. It was merely from ignorance that castes were imagined to be originally institutions of a social order. They had an esoteric meaning. In the beginning they divided people according to different modes of perception. The notion of caste has become atrophied and degraded in the course of inevitable deviations in the descending Law. This degradation is responsible for the loss of the rules that used to regulate the passage from one state of consciousness to another. The key word has been lost.

"To have eaten the mango" is an expression meaning to have tasted the fruit of knowledge. After having tasted knowledge, there is a state in which one says, "I do not know," for knowing no longer matters.

A strange fact is that someone who still likes discussions keeps on talking and teaching. And so much the better. On his level he is doing useful work. Vigilant observation of oneself means not sinking unconsciously into the depths that open up, but penetrating them gradually, for the inner being has become very sensitive.

It is said that the seed of knowledge has to be passed on secretly to him who is ready to receive it. After that it slowly ripens.

What becomes of those who have received this seed of Life? Some of them disappear with their treasure, and are heard of no more. But if a flame of living knowledge flares up in some particular place, the continuity of tradition will be recognized. There are well known signs. This fact is beyond man's vision. There is no logical explanation.

Some disciples create works bearing the name of the Master from whom they have received everything, with the aim of perpetuating his teaching; ashrams, esoteric schools, hospitals, universities and so on, which will constitute a way of progress for many people.

Other disciples, after a certain time, fritter away their treasure and even trample on it, for prakriti has once more

got them in its grasp. They will seek and find a new Master, but the process of dissolution goes on without their being aware of it, because it is a part of their own nature.

In every discipline there are those who know and see the Divine beyond the Guru. They are exceptional, outside the ordinary ranks of man. They are the solitary ones who re-live, through fragments, the experiences of the sages (*ṛsis*). The priests despise them and chase them, but should they become famous through their asceticism, their inner search and their wisdom, those same priests will build temples for them and celebrate sacrifices (*pūjās*) before them.¹

"He who knows" supports the world by his realization. His only treasure is to see "That." This word represents either an abstract idea or "He who reigns in the heart of man."

Those who recognize the existence of cosmic Laws through which the primordial Energy expresses itself acknowledge a trinity which is: Father-Mother-Child.² There is a Tantric verse (*śloka*) which says:

"...true emotion,
like a pure virgin,
dances with quick, light steps
in the heart of the yogi..."

All *yogis* say, "This pure virgin of which one speaks here is real emotion; it should be offered to the Supreme Lord, there where he dwells above everything." Then the heart melts. A moment of ecstasy, of abandonment; then comes the moment of a return to life. Such is the power of *śakti*. From such a union a child is conceived, a child of ethereal substance. This child is like a living sleep, conscious twenty-four hours a day in the womb of pure emotion. He has been wished for.

If, in the phenomenal world, such a child is born, he (like all other children) is symbolically black (*tamas-inertia*) at birth. He will inevitably have to evolve and pass

¹ Shri Ramana Maharshi (died in 1950) is a striking example of this.

² See page 34.

through the first cycle of colours that form the transition from black to red (*rajas*-energy). Complementary colour cycles will develop from the red and pass symbolically to white (*sattva*-spirit). Amongst the complementary colours much importance is given to yellow because it has no trace of either black or red. In fact, yellow represents the energy of *śakti*. *Śakti* herself moves in the higher knowledge of Shiva who appears fully white. The whiteness of Shiva radiates. Projected against the dark blue of the transcendence of Krishna-Purusha, it appears still more luminous.

Samkhya says that at the time of birth, on whatever plane it occurs, there is always a mixture of colours requiring purification until the white becomes pure and sparkling. He who has passed through purification becomes a Master. A Master is one who plays indifferently with all the colours of the rainbow. Black remains black, red remains red, and yellow remains yellow, each colour serving some definite aim of the Master.

In the *Vedas* the three colours black (night), red (dawn), yellow (noonday sun) appear daily in the same order and disappear in the inverse order. The recurrence is rigorous. Psychologically, these three colours are the fundamental modes of expression existing in each of us. Black symbolizes the unconscious heaviness or sleep of the inner being, which likes to persist in the midst of the prejudices that come with it. Red symbolizes impetuosity, agitation, temporary subjective awakening and sudden changes of direction. A period of agitation is always difficult but inescapable, for it is the time when prakriti moves by leaps and resists. This agitation will gradually cease by itself if, instead of feeding it and struggling against it, you utilize the force of knowledge. Yellow symbolizes a more subtle period. White is the vision of the whole in which 'doing' finds its place.¹

A Master is able at will to use the unconscious heaviness of those around him because the inertia of nature is the

¹ "Doing" is used in the sense of genuine action freely undertaken and fully conscious. This is very far from what is customarily called "doing."

ground on which Shiva performs his cosmic dance. A Master knows everything without reacting to anything, which in an ordinary man would be an attitude of stupidity. If a Master uses the agitation which is around him to create and destroy what must be destroyed, it becomes an energy guided by his wisdom, since he draws it from a Law known to him alone. This knowledge of a higher Law is white and faintly tinted. If a Master is conscious of this in his realization, he will make few mistakes. With this whiteness he has full control over the whole spectrum of colours. That is why Yama, the Lord of Death, is always represented esoterically in white, which is higher Knowledge. The buffalo on which he rides is pictured as black, which is the material force, and his *śakti* in red, which is the operative force.

Chaitanya said, "A man known for his wisdom in the world will find it difficult, even with all his intelligence, to understand the way of life and the actions of a man who has attained realization of the meaning of the cosmic Laws." That is also why the *Katha Upanishad* and the *Bhagavad Gita* speak of the Master who says to his beloved disciple: "...No one can understand me, not even you. Be satisfied with praising me..." Indeed, only the heart can recognize the Master. In this connection, I shall tell you some characteristic stories illustrating the extreme freedom of those free beings who play with the Laws. I shall not give any names because in popular language they are always called "Khepa" or "Mast."¹ Who they are, no one knows, for those who live near them have completely forgotten where they came from.

Once upon a time Khepa Baba was in Benares in the middle of a crowd of people who kept looking at him without daring to approach, for if anyone bothered him, he would brandish his stick and hurl insults. One daring woman came towards him moaning, "Oh Maharaj, have pity on me."

¹ The title of Khepa or Mast given to Sufis, like that of Baul given to Hindus, means "Fools of God."

"Daughter of a whore!" Khepa Baba shouted at her. "Come here and I will rape you in the street in front of everyone!" She fled!

Khepa Baba had a jug full of wine in front of him. He calmly drank it down to the last drop without saying a word. The people were stupefied at this impious act,¹ not understanding what was going on, but his disciples noticed that he had become white like Shiva; his body radiated light. Khepa Baba was in ecstasy.

With his immense power and his heart of pure gold, Khepa Baba spread almost insurmountable obstacles around him and created dangerous reefs, thus provoking deep disturbances in all those living near him. Who was he? What was he doing? He scrubbed off people's prejudices, he punctured the abcess of their ego, he burned the pillows of their laziness. Khepa Baba did all this in his uncouth way, for he himself was beyond good and evil. He provoked people into constantly facing themselves.

One day he ordered one of his favourite disciples to accompany him to Brindavan, which is one of the most sacred places of India, its atmosphere filled with the sweetness and charm of the Child-Krishna. Khepa Baba sat down among the beggars on the side of the dusty road, a piece of cloth spread out in front of him. Passers-by threw alms into it, small coins or a handful of rice. According to what he received, Khepa Baba murmured a word or two of blessing or emitted an obscene swearword. Back at his hut, he tied up the coins he had received in a rag and hung it on the wall. He lay down, but like a miser, kept watch over his meagre treasure all night long, stick in hand. His disciples, silent and reproachful were observing him. At last Khepa Baba swore at them, "Are you criticizing me? Well then! Away with all of you! What keeps you here?"

"I couldn't leave," related his favourite disciple. "I remained standing there until daybreak, not understanding

¹ In India it is traditional for those who give themselves up to a spiritual search not to drink alcohol.

what was going on before me or in me; and when the Master got up, I followed him. I sat down behind him while he begged on the side of the road. Then the Master turned round and said to me in a serious voice, 'Take a good look; this is one aspect of the world, and I shall show you still others!' "

"On another occasion," continued the disciple, "Khepa Baba sent me to the village market to steal a goat. He had seen it while passing and wanted that one and no other. It was an easy thing to do. But I was resisting. He insisted. I still refused. Then he shrugged his shoulders and went to sleep. I felt as though I were drunk, full of anguish. I started to vomit. Finally, covered with shame, I went out, weeping and gritting my teeth, and stole the goat. It was not until much later that I found out that all the goats of this supposed merchant belonged to Khepa Baba. One day Khepa Baba brutally chased away this beloved disciple. 'Go away!' he shouted at him. 'You are able to fly now with your own wings!' "

Among the disciples of Khepa Baba there was at Brindavan an illiterate villager, docile by nature and full of faith. With other pilgrims, he subjected himself once a year to a severe discipline which consisted of going around the whole town barefoot, making prostrations from time to time. At night the pilgrims rested but resumed their painful journey every morning at daybreak. The sun was blinding, the ground burned the soles of the feet, thirst and hunger were a constant torture. Well, one night Khepa Baba happened to be at one of the stopping places where the pilgrims were sleeping. He called that villager and asked him to prepare for him and others with him some *chāpātis*,¹ insisting that they be very thin. The villager went to light a brazier and began to knead the flour with water and salt. He made a pile of *chāpātis* and brought them to his Guru. "What a fool you are!" said the Guru, and raising his stick, struck him full in the face. The villager did not stir; his eyes saw only the eyes of the Master. Then Khepa Baba caught him

¹ A kind of unleavened bread.

by the shoulder and pressed him to his bosom. He made him sit down by his side and then to eat first. This disciple became a great saint, who died before Khepa Baba.

Khepa Baba wore his matted hair rolled into a bun on the top of his head. One of his disciples, imagining that he had hidden jewels in there, decided to poison him so as to get hold of them. One night he went stealthily to the corner of the house where the meal was being prepared and put arsenic in the Guru's food. But he was caught in the act. Yelling, the other men seized him to beat him and throw him out.

"Don't chase that man out!" cried Khepa Baba.

"Then you must do it yourself," shouted the disciples angrily.

"What has he done?"

"He tried to poison you with arsenic!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Khepa Baba, "and you poison me daily with your quarrels.... Get away, all of you! Out of here!" The tumult subsided. The man remained.

It is difficult, indeed, to understand the actions of a man who has come to the realization in himself of the cosmic Laws; his life is lived under everyone's eyes day and night, and is absolutely untainted with egoism. Khepa Baba, with all the knots of his heart untied, let things happen naturally. What did it matter that someone wanted to kill him and others to avenge him? The Laws have always worked in the same way, in a prakriti that is always the same.

In the ashram in Assam the contrasts were equally violent. What is a Guru for, if not to tear us apart from ourselves? The co-disciples were often hungry while the Master had all he could possibly want. Those who could not bear it left. To others it all seemed natural; we were intoxicated by the Master's presence. We lived on his knowledge.

LIFE — DEATH

“Let me carry Death in Life,
So that I may find Life in Death.”¹

These two lines from Tagore give a key to understanding what we could call a spiritual existentialism.²

Life has to be lived against the background of death.

The idea of death permeating life can make us free, free from all bondage and limitations, whereas life by its own nature possesses and binds.

If in our lives we could keep in ourselves the quietness of death, we would have access to creative intelligence. On the moral plane this would be the level of objectivity.

To die consciously is simply the passage from one density to another in the full consciousness of the inner being.

I am not speaking of death in its physical aspect, the inevitable last scene of the human drama, but of death in Shiva, that is, of the transcendence that sustains the creative rhythm of life. All of us can ‘construct’ all sorts of things in ordinary life, but to create we must be liberated by conscious death in Shiva. Creative vision, in fact, belongs only to him who, without being stopped by the dance of life, dares to look within himself as far as the Void. Then what does he see? The beginning and the end, that is to say, the seed from which life springs, and the flowers under which life’s adventure ends. He sees the rainbow of the Void linking them both.

How desirable it would be to feel in oneself the great force that lies dormant behind the term *māyāvāda*.³ *Māyā* in itself is neither illusion nor relativity. Alas! People do not wish to understand that these two words express the passivity, the sleep and the recurrences belonging to prakriti, where as

¹ From *Naivedya* (Offerings to the Deity) included in *Gītavitana*.

² See pp. 87, 89.

³ A theory according to which multiplicity or manifestation is unreal.

māyā can mean free will and the freedom to create. *Māyā* is a life-idea in its multiple forms, just as the word "flower" gives rise to endless forms in the mind.

To which form should one be attached? To each one and yet to all at the same time! Imagine that you are not attached to one form or another, that you are impartial, then every form will delight you, for in each one you will see the life-idea incarnated. And *māyā* is the exuberance of creation.

Thus India exists in various forms, some beautiful, some ugly, yet the dualistic distinctions become unreal as soon as a movement upward toward the light is recognized. Our life-impulse is evidence of the reality of this.

How true is the saying of the Buddha that the ultimate reality is the Void itself and that existence issues from non-existence. All we can try to do is to bring the idea of death to the very heart of life, for to know that everything will finally disappear into the Void is a great relief. We work with a smile and a feeling of freedom only if we know that nothing will last forever. In this knowledge we can be like children building castles of sand on the shore of time.

The self might be eternal but the body is not. It must wither away. When the body can no longer work, it goes to sleep or dies. The only consolation is that even then one can remain fully awake in the inner being. And then, only then, like the dying sun, one feels an expansion into oneness with the reality behind. One has then no wish to take part in the devil's dance of the world. One should resign fully to this play between spirit and matter and not turn back. This is the carrying of death to glory in life.

All *Raja-yoga* is a study of death: how to accept consciously the living inertia and dare to face it. He who dies valiantly in war or in self-sacrifice touches a plane of consciousness which, at its best, corresponds to the spiritual being. He who sees death approach with bitterness does not know really what sweetness is. He who sees death approach with sweetness knows as well the meaning of bitterness.

This is a much higher plane of consciousness.

To follow this discipline throughout life is to harmonize the levels of the inner being in the face of existence, without identification, without thought, with the help of breathing exercises (*prāṇāyāma*)¹ when they have become familiar and natural. Then the Void is the return to the beginning, the matrix of Life.

At the moment of death, all that is matter returns to matter, all that is energy returns to primordial energy. Only those very rare beings who have worked consciously to bring their different 'I's together around the central axis and who have freed themselves from the grip of prakriti escape this dispersion. For them, real Existence (*sat*) continues.

He who is conscious of this process progresses slowly and without any will whatsoever, for unification around the axis is not the result of efforts but is made possible by a new 'substance' which arises when the right time comes. This substance is known exactly, and is described in different ways in the *Upanishads*.

At the moment of physical death or of passage to a lighter density, Purusha is perceptible in the vibration of *śakti*. It is a moment of transubstantiation, a function of the spirit informed by sensation.

When you are face to face with death, do not struggle. Let yourself glide. The wave that will carry you away is cosmic. It is not comparable to any life force. It is written that "death is the last of the sacrifices." To reach this point, the sacrifice of life must have been made long before. Then, in the last sacrifice, there is not even a waiting for death. It is simply the 'life-death state,' even beyond the experience being lived. Just as you progress through life, so you will progress through death. Do not struggle. It is with this attitude of openness that one can hear 'the call of the secret companion,' the voice of death. What follows no longer has any meaning; one enters a new field of forces. Does

¹ *Prāṇāyāma* are breathing exercises that can lead to a knowledge of the inner being.

one know what is going to happen when arriving on earth? Why would it not be the same thing after death? There may be as many solutions in death as there are in life. One follows, it is certain, a road opened by an exact Law.

The monk's renunciation, *sannyāsa*, truly signifies death. It is one of the great traditional ways of India.

A theory of death and *sannyāsa* existed among the Vedic sages long before the advent of Buddhism. Buddhism, with its great monastic tradition, is a kind of organized *sannyāsa*. The Buddhist monks were nourished through the Samkhya philosophy, with its idealization of Shiva.

In short, Shiva and Buddha became the same ideal, expressed by the sound "A-Ham," which expresses the whole being and the whole ego, since this sound is composed of two letters — the first and the last of the Sanskrit alphabet.¹

It is written in the *Puranas* that the first letter of the alphabet stands for life, and that the last stands for death. Therefore the two states, life-death, are united by the great *mantra* "Hari-Hara," which means "to live a full life." But no one understands it.

How many sincere monks are there on that difficult path of destruction (*pralaya*)? Very few. Most of them wear the ochre robe of renunciation as an emblem of what they are attempting to reach, but are not any the less attached to what they still possess. Sometimes it is merely the idea itself which is represented by their robe. The real *sannyāsin* is the one described in the *Bhagavad Gita*, who goes about with no outer sign by which he can be recognized and who often wears different masks in the world.

The question "What exists after death?" was formulated very early by the *ṛṣis* of the *Upanishads*.

Ramprasad,² much nearer to our time, gave an answer

¹ *Aitareya Aranyaka*, II, 3.8.

² XVIIIth century.

to this question in one of his songs, which even today is on everybody's lips:

“...Do you know, my brother,
what man becomes after death?
There remains but a water bubble...
Spurting from the wave, it sinks again into the foam
forming but one with the immense ocean....”

The question “What becomes of the soul after death?” was also asked long ago in the *Katha Upanishad*¹ and the answer given was exactly the same as that of Ramprasad.

If we accept this idea of the water bubble leaving the matrix of Great Nature and returning to its bosom, then there is neither paradise nor hell after death.

Indeed if this answer is *felt* to the point where the entire being is filled, all values, in this light, become true.

Death is luminous — its luminosity is similar to the luminous darkness recognized by science in the Cosmos, revealing all existing colours.

Time merges into space as life merges into the Void. If you always bear this in mind you are not afraid of the moment of dying. The luminous Void gives you such security!

One might go off at any moment. But one has a duty toward oneself and toward the Void, a very definite equation must be solved. If one says, “I am in the Void,” it must be not only with the mind and prayers but with the whole being: the pure being and the impure being, both together.

Death and life cannot be separated. They are the bi-une aspect of Creation. The *Bhagavad Gita* states it: “What has had a birth must one day die. What is dying will be reborn.”

Death is real communion with God; why are people so afraid of death? It is because they cannot drop their small ego. They hold on to it; then, seized by fright, they are unable to go further.

¹ *Aitareya Aranyaka*, II, 1.15.

It is only when we can consciously bring death within life and life within death that we can laugh about anything or rather smile softly. What has really a meaning? What can we really do? Only be ourselves and create harmony in people and between them without interfering.

We have each of us to meet our *karma* and surrender fully to it. There is sometimes a strong pull upward with a feeling of lightness and joy, then comes a pull downward with pains and anguish, a drowsiness of the mind, a fatigue of the body, which almost faints and loses its hold. From this impure plane, we might suddenly be drawn upward because our eyes have seen the way. Then immediately we stand above our anguish. It has nothing to do with personality. It is simply as though the equilibrium had been broken.

When our personal *karma* has been fully accepted, then it is transformed into *śakti*, into power, a power in which one feels responsible for the structure of one's being. But remember that the human *śakti* is never equal to the *śakti* of God; even if we can share His wisdom and His joy, we can never share His power! Man, however, is constantly trying to seize God's power. At present, many scientists and philosophers busy themselves with the subjective and objective worlds, trying to transcend both of them. Their eyes are turned outward. They do not look inward, where the answer is kept secret.

The deep Samkhya position is that of Purusha enjoying His own acting. He knows and enjoys it in purity. When the human *karma* becomes *śakti*, how does it merge into the power of God? There is a great calmness of the self, apart from seeing: it is a self-enjoyment in which one simply looks on.

In front of death one is automatically drawn inward, and one lives intensely the life of the great Silence radiating in every direction and penetrating everything, which is simply its own self. This is living in complete aloneness in the great Alone. This is the 'golden Germ of existence' which eternally

is, as the Vedic seers said. This Aloneness is a mystery. It can be either ignorance or wisdom. Those who fear death are in ignorance. Those who face death with a steady gaze, even knowing that they cannot conquer it are at one with death and that is wisdom.

Remember the story of the great Sufi who, under Aurangzeb, affirmed his faith as he was about to be beheaded. He was put to death because he had declared: "There is no God!" His followers knew that he had meant: "One day, I shall be put to death for having said: 'There is no God.' For as long as I am in this body, how can I know God? Communion with God is only beyond life...." Well, we are told that the Prince who had condemned him to death, said when he himself was dying: "I know no peace. Do not take me as a model of Moslem life. I have never been able to surrender. I have been arrogant. I know nothing."

You must train yourselves, day after day, to meet death at any moment, in any circumstance. It seems a very cold path. But renunciation has a strong and positive footing, which is love; while detachment is really the fear of being caught by love. Of course, one can say: "I am not attached to you. I renounce you, and this is only because I love you. I don't allow you to be attached to me." One would then miss the real "I" and the real me. Real love means living a spiritual existence in spirit without name or form — it is pure love in the Void.

If you reach that stage, then, you come back again from the Void, to body and to forms. It is from this Void that wine and bread, though they are matter, have become divine in the mystery of transubstantiation. Similarly Christ on the Cross, for one second, was fully human, carrying the agony of the whole world when he cried: "Eloï, Eloï sabachthani — My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"¹ In this complete surrender and in the long cry that followed in which he gave up the spirit, he was fully the Son of God, the Messenger.

¹ *Matt 27:46 and Mar 15:34.*

Such Aloneness is communion with God.

Through a long illness, any one of us could also ask the question: "Why? Is there no God for me?" The answer comes: "Be patient." In his last days, Shri Ramakrishna, dying at fifty-four from cancer of the throat, also put the same question and he gave himself the answer: "Now I see everything as total *sat-cit-ānanda*.¹ Even this cancer in my throat is *That*." Ignorance, falsehood, pains have their weight in *sat-cit-ānanda*, a totality, a completeness as expressed by Samkhya. *Sam* is the totality, that which is complete. *Khya* is what one sees, what one speaks, what one knows. If one loves God, one shall die to this body only. In love everything exists: what is great and what is small merge finally into Unity.

In the Vedic tradition, the attainment of immortality is connected with libations performed three times a day: when the sun rises, when it reaches the zenith, when it sets, depicting the babe at birth, maturity, and old age. All three belong to the lower prakriti.

But in old age, facing death means knowing that "I am immortal," knowing that death has two masks: the dark one and the luminous one. In the *Katha Upanishad*, Nachiketas speaks to the "luminous Lord of Death." Death can never be conquered but entering into it consciously means keeping the vision of the Void and the flow of life within. It is from aloneness that death, as the luminous bridegroom, appears with the one sound "OM" which is felt in the heart — a note in which the entire music of prakriti, symphonies and all noises of nature, towns, streets, minds, opinions and phonetics merge into one vibration, the divine "OM."

In an ignorant way, the body is killed by death and burnt. It becomes ashes, manure for the earth. But how many bodies do we have? Besides the physical body which is destroyed this way, there are two other bodies which can be

¹ Pure Existence, pure Spirit, pure Bliss.

felt and seen only by the inner being because they both have a subtle form. They are the "pranic-body" made of life-forces and the "mind-body," which is sometimes turned outward with an objective view over the world and at other times turned inward with a subjective view over the inner being. When this inner vibration becomes intense, the world is completely forgotten. Then starts a continuous meditation, giving rise to intuition which, in itself, is a spiritual attainment. Intuition expands in a soft light, a light like the dawn in which "one begins to feel that one is united with that light." It is a state of liberation.

There are two sorts of man. One is of the coward type who is easily crushed by shocks and blows. When he falls, he dies. The second is of the hero type who emerges from any shock or blow, sustained by his pranic-body and his mind-body, which react. These bodies cannot be crushed even if the physical body dies.

How does the mind-body see death approaching? There is a point of time in which two parallel views of two different bodies merge. They can be compared to the homogeneous light of dawn. The light of dawn is equal everywhere. That flow of soft light is space, like a wide consciousness spreading everywhere.

Then the sun rises in its glory with innumerable rays of light all around it. With this movement of the sun, time appears in space. Sharp lines of light diverge in all directions from the centre of the sun, every one of them touching a point in space, creating innumerable lines of consciousness — of people — nobody knowing anybody though attracted by the centre! There is no unity, no fusion, but really a fission of light; except for the communion of a few beings, beginning to feel in themselves: "I am everyone, I am the light."

Moving toward that communion, two lines of light might be coming nearer and nearer to each other, both attracted by the one point — the self — in the centre, which is the

Great I. Love of the Great I is pure love in the Void.

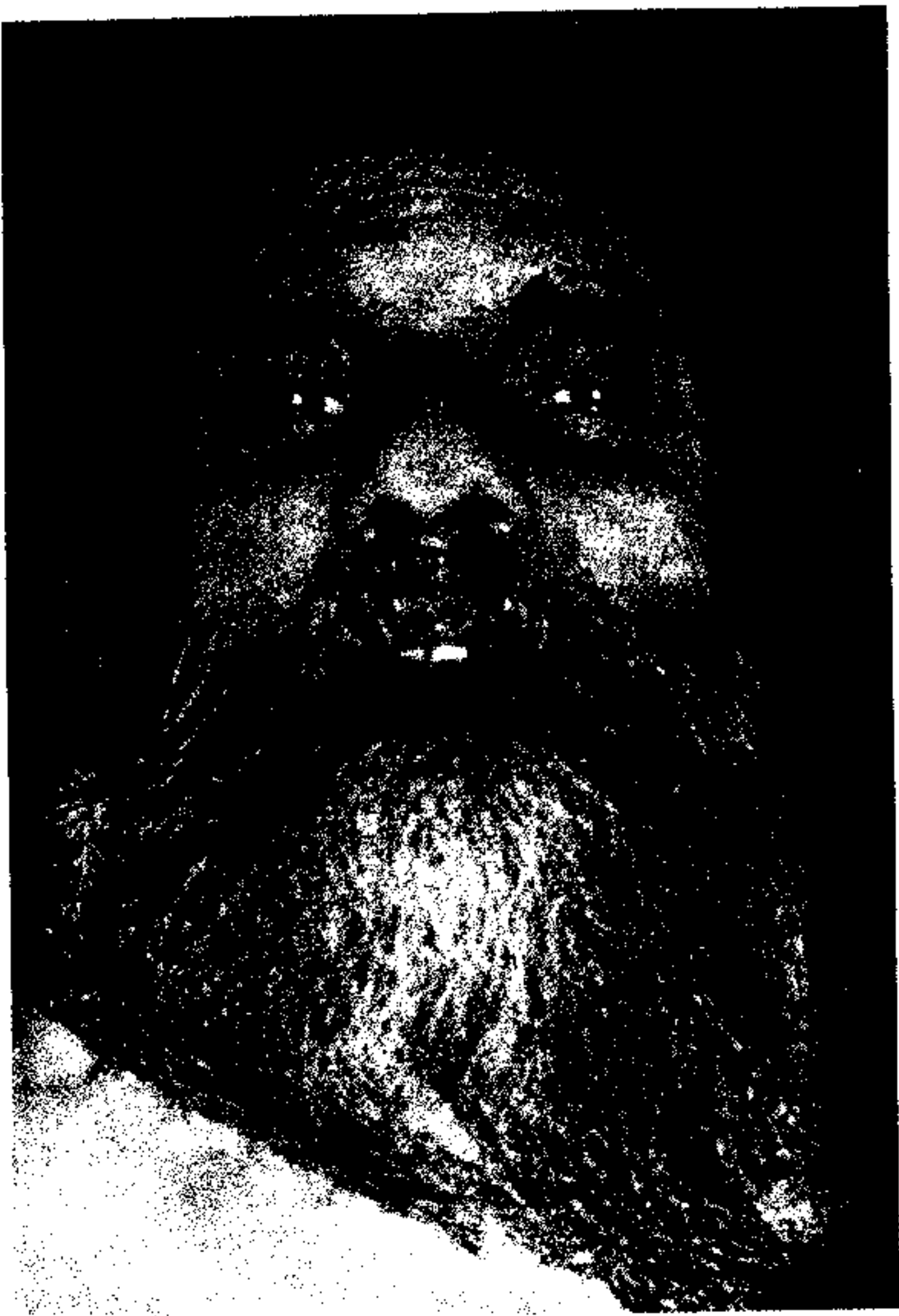
But we belong to time, where alone there is death. We are expanding toward space, the homogeneous globular Void which, in its centre, contains life, death and beyond that Nothing.



PART II

FACING REALITY

**One cannot do,
but one can look on,
and see the One being,
and be with It.**



1977

For most people, ordinary life is lived, under some blind impulsion, as in a deep sleep or in a narcotic state. Although not lacking an end of sorts, this kind of life has neither heights nor depths. Only a few wake up. Pained by the inadequacy they feel and see around themselves, yearning for a life which transcends the usual physical needs, vital urges and mental associations, they finally become absorbed in a new query. Hence begins man's journey toward the fullness of life in the secrecy of the heart and in the boundless independence of the soul.

The quest is integral in character, as is dimly evidenced in the world consciousness where it is as yet incipient, a striving to make a fully conscious life operate here and now. Obstacles come from the narrow outlook that considers reality not as a whole but as split up into matter and consciousness. In other words, the Totality¹ in which all polarities melt, has been distorted into a "whole" divided into two parts, with the result that "the integral Truth" has ever remained baffling and elusive.

It is man's destiny to realize Unity, which means realizing the Self, for the one is the manifestation of the other in degrees as well as in multiplicities. The journey is through the multiplicities and oppositions caused by ignorance and onward to the shores of knowledge. The world is the field of experiment for man's quest for Unity.

In his effort to march to the cosmic status of Laws, man produces all oppositions by the machinery of egoism and of intellect. For instance, the opposition of joy and sorrow is relative and primal; it exists not for the unifying "I" but only for the narrow, bounded "I."

What is adequate for surface knowledge fails at the threshold of integral knowledge and must therefore be replaced by intuition, or knowledge by identity, in contrast to intellectual knowledge. So a retreat is indicated, a withdrawal from the sense objects outside the mind, into an im-

¹ The Void.

mersion wherein the mind is transformed into the sixth sense of the mystics, in which alone the profound mysteries are revealed.

The entire universe is a pulsation of energy upheld by whom? What is of practical importance is that energy can be measured and put into service, that its pulsation occurs in the mind where it is upheld and manifests itself as dynamic play.

Why should existence be pulsated at all? The question can be ignored if it relates to matter, but not if it relates to consciousness. If existence is consciousness, waves of energy must also be conscious.

They do not however appear to be so in the waking state, now ignorantly regarded as the only measure of consciousness. A satisfactory reply might come through intuition, which can penetrate the depths of the self and realize its nature. Existence is consciousness and its pulsations are conscious pulsations, which in the depths of our being are apprehended as primordial joy. To an integral view, the universe is the joy of the pure Being crystallized through self-expression. Being is *sat-cit-ānanda*, a pure sensation.

This is the essential nature of man, though it is distorted by a sense of limitations, so that we do not feel limitless and wide but are cribbed, confined and restless. We move only by blind impulses of pleasure, pain and indifference. This phase can be lived through by the practice of deliberate, all-accepting indifference, until finally each of our reactions lights up in consciousness and an immeasurable cosmic peace is attained.

An obvious gap in man's conscious striving has been filled by the ego's power projections, so that reality has become a mere repetition or reflected images with a variety of mutations and gradations. The power which belonged integrally to the mind was projected out of the self, but can now be drawn back into the self.

Indeed the ordinary mind looks on and passes judgement; it sees only errors in the world-process and gives its consent

because it wants to. This entire process is ordained by an incorporated stress to create "the many," which then appears as truth, and ignorance as the acquiring of knowledge.

Yet we know of a truly creative higher-mind¹ which exists germinally within the ordinary mind. It is a living consciousness — a pure sensation in which the subject is the object. To know is then to be. Existence and consciousness are One — a harmonious whole.

The concepts of Purusha and Prakriti can best be explained by Samkhya: Purusha the timeless, the immobile, the Seer, the ingathered totality — and Prakriti² with its dynamism of will in time. The life-urge rushes on, driven by some hidden force which pushes it from below or pulls it from above; but after reaching a certain point it subsides into quiescence, which in awareness means a fusion of the plenum and the Void. In itself, this quiescence is simple, colourless and indeterminate; it is the final abstract stage of pure Consciousness.

Its value cannot be measured; it is at once the zero and infinity. The sole qualitative value that can be ascribed to it is a feeling of relaxation and expansion and a sense of serene poise in the Void. It may mean a plenum which, like the consummation of death, may burst into glory at any point of the prakriti³ evolution.

The world of the spirit is just as real as the world of the senses and mysteries abound in both. The adventures of the human mind in both these realms are equally justifiable, because their ultimate aim is the creation of some abiding values that will widen consciousness — the last irreducible factor in the scale of being. What is hidden must be laid bare and made to yield to the growth of the being as a whole. Here science and religion meet on common ground: a leap

¹ which is the super-mind in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

² The higher Prakriti.

³ The lower prakriti.

into the beyond, whether aided by a flight of the imagination or by a living faith sustained by what seems to be an emerging truth, is the motive force in both. Both aim at converting knowledge into a utility that will lead to a harmonious growth of the collective life.

While science lays stress on tangible data, the spiritual quest is more concerned with an array of subjective phenomena which seem to elude the senses. In both, the mind is confronted with some indubitable facts of experience, behind which it perceives the existence of some occult force whose working it tries to grasp and manipulate. But it was not like this with the ancient Vedic seers. A purity of consciousness allowed them to see reality as a whole; and in the scale of matter, force and spirit, they could discern a process of gradual illumination occurring in some mental Being of universal extension and infinite potentiality. This is the integral Vedic vision on which rest the two worlds wherein matter is as easily spiritualized as spirit is materialized.

The *sahaja* is the innate, simple and blissfully free nature of man to be discovered in the inmost depths of his being — his essence — “what is born with him.” It lies in the inner temple of the heart, yet spreads over the earth and transcends the heavens. The *sahaja* can be realised either rationally by a simple intuition of the Void, or emotionally by a sublimation of human love. Indeed the Void and conscious love are two aspects of the same reality. And the conscious man is the ultimate Truth of existence.

A deep faith, a lucid rationalism, a crystal-clear vision are among the features of a distinctive *sahaja* mysticism, which has been variously described by rationalist schools as attaining light. The cardinal principle is an inwardization that takes the form of concentration. This corresponds to the plane of true knowledge as expressed in the *Upanishads* and to the state of absorption of the mind described by the disciples of the rationalist schools.

The basic ground of mystic life is always an inwardiza-

tion leading to a deepening and broadening consciousness that contacts and assimilates reality. It means sensing the real and becoming the real and finding out finally the link of pure Existence within non-existence.

The Vedic delineation of the mystic path towards the Void has given rise to the practical science of Samkhya, with innumerable psychological details based upon a well-knit system of philosophical theory, codified by Patanjali in a set of *Aphorisms* which remain unsurpassed. But the mind must seize upon some objective data before it can work its way up among the described subjective data which form the core of every spiritual discipline.¹

In the Void, the primordial energy is simply existing. In its very essence it is both dynamic and passive, the two distinctive forces which are always fighting within us! It is from the marriage of these two qualities embodied in the traits of Kardama and Devahuti, that Kapila, the founder of Samkhya and known as the Master of Wisdom, was born. In him there was a double nature: the power which had created his father, Kardama, out of absolutely pure mud, and that which had created his mother, Devahuti, out of subtle, divine matter. Devahuti, who was purely aspiration, was attracted by the material essence of Kardama, which she needed in order to make her descent to earth.

Because he was made of mud, Kapila was bound to live in underground caves. He had the double task of leading the human race to conceive of the Void in all things and of demonstrating that it is impossible to realise the Divine without having a body made of mud. Even the Buddha had such a body, so that one day he had to deny it.

Kapila's primordial wisdom would have remained an abstraction for us and would have vanished altogether were

¹ In medieval India (15th-16th century) there was a confluence of the mystic currents of the three great living religions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. This explains why some of their most significant terms can be considered as interchangeable.

it not that his mother Devahuti, as has already been said,¹ devoted herself voluntarily to serving the human aspiration for the Divine.

The Void is at first an obscure conception to many, until the bi-une existence in us becomes a reality. The secret energy of the earth rises up like the sap of a tree, through the trunk of the body, to the crown of the head where it blooms. Such is the union of Kardama and Devahuti.

When in the practice of your discipline, you disappear into the Void, you are using your own energy which usually remains dormant. But there it is! It is your inner strength to be in the world but not of the world! You can say: "Within ourselves we are one with our power of manifestation, while the spirit remains the witness." Whenever you feel that they come together, you must remain quiet. You then feel an indescribable sensation of wisdom and that wisdom which is born into you comes from above! But always be humble and remember that your physical consciousness with its many contradictions, is a gift of Kardama, the being made of mud, while Devahuti, the strong aspiration of the soul, opens your eyes to a higher dimension. The life plane on which there is a search for a mental consciousness is already on a higher dimension, though still in the realm of duality. Further on, an aspiration towards unity shines like the light of an energy searching for a way to reach the Void. Of course it is a joy to live in the Void and to see things being done for us by our own power of manifestation.

The quality of a pure sensation develops little by little, because at every moment the Truth is new. One cannot reach it by accumulating experience, because the Truth is free, as are the Laws of life which govern events. The values created by the power of manifestation are real only insofar as they are relevant to the inner spirit. There one does not feel anything, as the Void absorbs all shocks and you see a serene sky overhead. The meaning of all existence is a peace which endures all.

¹ See p. 4.

Any real talk about scientific method is simply a return to a basic empiricism where you are nothing but a pure sensation devoid of colouring or stress.

Remain unshaken in your spirit. That is the Law of manifestation everywhere. And so, outwardly, life lives through death, while inwardly it is immortal.

The sky is clear. One may say it is pleasant. By what standard? Beyond pleasure and pain there is pure Existence; the Void which knows no comparison nor degree and so is immeasurable. It is as light and superficial as the appearance of things. Deep down in that superficiality there is sheer emptiness. And it is a fulfilment beyond comprehension. Time stops. And you are free.

Things will come and pass on. They do not come to stay. They are always on the move. One is neither attached nor detached from them; one simply looks on, standing in the heart of all movement without moving.

The body which is the denser part of prakriti, is slow to move. So it often lags behind when the spirit in its turn is free. The body's mode of recovering from any fatigue is to induce deep rest within itself from the deeper source of the Void. It then becomes coexistent with the sky so vividly described in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*. It is then like the body of a small child newly awakened, in whom body and spirit are together in a state of universalization. The ageing body will die one day; this is the mechanical Law of prakriti. But there will immediately be a resurrection of the Divine body in which "the Word is made flesh."

A vision is a common phenomenon in the beginning of spiritual experiences. It is a fact of inner reality which takes shape very naturally in outer symbolism. The symbols should never be analysed by the intellect but should be absorbed and understood by the heart. The intellect often binds us to external conventions which do not allow us to

see the uniqueness of the Truth underlying the symbol. This is an enactment of the eternal drama of the awakening of prakriti by the *random* touch of Purusha and of the inner illumination finding expression in the sign.

For some days, I have been brooding over the idea of the supreme Power (*mahāśakti*) being like a tiny girl. The experience is so wonderful! To go to the Baby-Christ, or Baby-Krishna or Baby-Gauri is to go down to the depths where the ideal and the real fuse in such a wonderfully simple way that it becomes most expressive when it is inexpressible! This vital symbolism is the real Tantric way of looking at things. And the *Upanishads* call it: "After full knowledge, the spirit's return to childhood." It is just the opposite, and, at the same time, the complement of what the Freudian psychologists would call infantile sexuality. In fact: it means going to the roots of matter in spirit. And in Christianity this means incarnation which is none other than sublimated idolatry.

This is life within, true life indeed, a volcanic eruption outside perfectly balanced Laws, and with joy in both creation and destruction.

A very simple but strange experience occurred the other day. A baby was crying loudly in a near by house. Something must have been hurting it badly. And the mother was crooning over it and trying to soothe it. The baby was no doubt suffering. But the suffering was purely mechanical and thus meaningless to it. It had no mind as yet and so it was suffering passively and not creating more suffering through the agency of the mind. But the mother?

Her anxiety is a creation of the mind which grows as the days pass by and she cannot throw it off. And her suffering is durably greater than that of her child. The child's mind is so light — it is one with Purusha and not with prakriti. Why has the mother forgotten the art of suffering mechanically, as she did when she was a child? Therefore life

has become a curse to her!

When spirit and matter come together there is a movement of energy between the two; there must arise some suffering because of maladjustments. But why bring the mind into it? Why turn an unreal mechanical suffering into a mentally created one? Why not always remain a child in one's heart?

Suffering there is and must be. But make it a dead mechanical thing, only a movement of prakriti! No mind and no suffering! And this is Samkhya appearing in the garb of Zen! Perhaps this is why Indian theatre always turns a tragic drama into a comic one!

A fine comedy is staged by prakriti. It is quite natural that all things die, even noble thoughts. But after their death, we solemnly and ritually turn them into mummies and raise pyramids over them. The seed of life escapes our notice. It takes root in the soil and silently spreads a carpet of green grass around these colossal structures of man-made truths, of which the archeologists are so proud. Everyone of us will die, but the bare Truth in us will live. It will appear in a new garb. Always a new garb is woven by prakriti to cover the austere nudity of Truth, which has been pictured as the unclad Shiva roaming in the cremation ground.

Here is life and here is death, and both go together to make Truth. Many walk along this path, but only a few will reach the goal. Those who drop beside the way will turn into good manure. So nothing will be lost, and there is no regret when the heart is full carrying within itself the whole universe. "Move on like the refreshing wind of the spring and make young leaves sprout," as Shankara has said.

When a work is an expression of inner life, it always moves smoothly. It is like a running stream. If difficulties are thrown in its way, it will simply move round them and then flow again freely and serenely.

When facing difficulties, identify yourselves with the power of *śakti* which is working behind every movement. You can work carefully at the level of your understanding. And you can take life as it offers itself to us. It is a joyful inner experience to accept it as well as everything it brings us; but the moment comes when we must know how to sever even the bonds that bind us to one another.

We should remain fully in prakriti and yet above her, seeing in ourselves the unfolding of the great drama of life, whose glorious end is already known to us. The curtain descends, and we stand gathering the whole troupe of dramatic personae within us. It is, as the Buddhists say, the turning of the wheel of destiny which never stops. The wheel is always moving. It will be moving on and on till the end of time. To reveal it to the gaze of others, to follow it with our eyes, our heart, our deathless spirit and to feel it with every atom of our being, that is immortality!

In this tremendous experience, all philosophies created by men are nothing but verbalism, like a pile of dead leaves. The "I" vanishes like mist before light. But there again, the mind is thirsty for Truth. What is Truth? A precise sensation of the "I-subject" completely dissociated from the "I-object." I am detached from my existence, from all that is matter, energy and mind. But even at that stage, the "I-subject" is still what tastes the state of pure Consciousness. And where is the heart of the cosmic Laws, the heart of the life Principle? The mystery remains insoluble, the face of Truth is still hidden by a veil!

The idea of bringing back spiritual communism with a Vedic resurgence is quite laudable. It means a spiritual existentialism which is just a natural corroboration of living within ourselves.

But the moment we begin to live outside ourselves we are divided and separated from others by our physical, vital and mental reactions. In between the two attitudes, there is of course a land of "spiritual romance" where the unattainable

appears to be easily attained, but it leaves no mark of any kind!

The *Vedas* speak of spiritual existentialism as being the domain of *śakti*, who is inscrutable in her mystery and is ever elusive. Yet she does all and everything. She is the pure *sattva* of Samkhya. If a few sincere hearts would unite in this pure *sattva*, they could form the core of a powerful spiritual centre, which could live and progress for a long time. It will sooner or later degenerate into a church or an *āśram*, following then the natural Law of the running down of matter. But the idea will resurrect and will rise again from its grave.

"Spiritual existentialism" is a good expression. The idea behind it may actually be a community feeling on the economic and political level. But political ideologies are bound to starve if they are not supported by a feeling of communion with the spirit that embraces the whole of existence — matter, life, mind and spirit. This is the real Holy Communion: in Christianity you call it "God, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." In terms of Samkhya, it is "the holy communion of Purusha and Prakriti;" in Tantrism, "Shiva-*śakti*;" in Vedanta, "Brahma-Maya;" and you cannot separate the two.

For they permeate each other as in the metaphor of "two houses caught by the same fire," or just as in the case of a couple locked in a love embrace where "each is both." This idea appears in Indian temple sculpture innumerable times. The mystics have called it *sahaja*. We often call it the Void, which is not a negation but a living and positive idea in which the mystery of existence seems like a comingling of black and white. The black is matter and the white is spirit.¹ They enter into each other and between the two poles of matter and spirit, or earth and heaven in the *Vedas*, infinite shades of coexistence occur in different degrees of densities.

¹ The opposition white-black always means Purusha-prakriti (spirit-matter).

Density is an important word in the philosophy of the Void which is expressed in Samkhya as the three *guṇas*. It is simply a philosophical expression of the natural phenomena of light becoming darkness and vice versa. You cannot separate them. The illumination of the highest realization of a seeker imperceptibly contains the dark matrix of nature, just as that dark matrix contains in itself luminous possibilities of spiritual evolution. To realize the two movements simultaneously in a single flash of awareness is to realize the Void of the life within.

Then all densities disappear and spirit and matter become one, being really the bi-une aspects of one total reality. The most subtle density of natural manifestation is the "ego" (the "I-ness"), which is so elusive that it is extremely difficult to eradicate it. The point of fusion between black and white is missed when the ego automatically divides the whole experience into subject and object. But when, in a spiritual experience, the two are fused, the self appears as the Void, embracing all. There is a feeling of boundless expansion (*ākāśa*), which covers all things and yet allows them to maintain their distinct individualities, and which are again an infinite number of points, each containing the matrix of another universe. This is Prakriti's attribute as a creative and executive force. It can be likened to an acorn which, with its innumerable tiny seeds, contains a whole oak-forest!

If someone could realize this not only in feeling but in bodily sensation, he could project a community living a real spiritual existentialism which would endure and prosper. It is a great task and requires the power of a super-human being. But it is worthwhile for a man or woman to undertake it.

I can feel that some of you are on the brink of the Void! With a little push you would fall into it locked in a close embrace. You would be transformed into a fusion of fire and ether at the same time. The ether would expand into infinite space and the fire would condense into a luminous point becoming the matrix of matter. But you have to remember

that it is not a question of fission between the two, but of a fusion in which each partakes of the nature of both. And again you can be helped in your conception of this inmost communion by the metaphor of "one fire consuming two houses," in which the flames intermingle as a couple in love do. A Baul mystic of Bengal described it thus: "When I loved him, I did not know that he was a man and I a woman. Our hearts were simply ground into one paste in which two elements mingled."

It is a fascinating discovery to discover how the higher centres — mental and emotional, work in conjunction with the lower ones, including sex. They can be physically felt in the nervous system, in which the group of five elements are carefully and methodically arranged. This gives the clue to the transformation or, as the Christian mystics call it, "transubstantiation" of Christ's body. It shows vividly in what way the body of the Christ became the Church. And, regarding a still earlier period, it explains the *dharma* and the *samgha* (the universal spiritual principles and community life) of the Buddhists. You must remember here that the mystic Samkhya (and not the academic Samkhya of the third century, which broke away from the parent stock) openly teaches about the five material principles as arranged according to a scheme of different densities.

These things can be felt and projected like bright stars in the sky, as if on an illumined photographic plate. You have to be fully aware of these bright spots, not in an objective way as the ego does, but in the subjective way which is a direct seeing-feeling, not of the ego but of the self that is simply the Void. It is what a mystic will know from within, when from the centre of the heart the cosmic periphery and "a beyond" are felt. Then this beyond or transcendence becomes a positive experience and absorbs into itself all the negative modes of mental experiences. In a supreme awareness the Void is possessed without any mental fumbling.

What a mystery is this ego! If it does not move, nothing

is alive; if it moves, it is subjective; if it looks around it is separated from others. Only in the instant when it is both "this and that" do we know the density which is ours: weight, name, colour, form. The deeper we go into ourselves, the more vulnerable we become until a reversal takes place like a strong gust of wind, which almost bowls us over into the Void.

There is something particular to be noticed about the Indo-European languages. They use three numbers to describe anything: singular, dual and plural. Many of the Indian languages also preserve this trait. The plural is of course descriptive of the plurality of the universe. In every phase of existence, whether material or spiritual, we encounter the "many". They crowd and jostle together and then group themselves in pairs; the result is that duality appears in a scheme of polarity, as light and darkness, pleasure and pain, matter and energy, body and mind, and so on. These dual opposites are surmounted by a spiritual principle which tries to express itself everywhere in a sort of monism that applies from whatever angle you look at things. So we come to the concepts of one matter, one life, one mind, one human being, one nationality, one world, one God, and so on. This universalization of any one of the apparently plural entities can be understood only when, in your awareness of them, you identify yourself with their essence.

The total awareness of the identification of the "many," in Samkhya, has been called Purusha. The supreme Purusha can be expressed not only as the complete fusion of all the polarities and multiplicities, but also as the bi-une Principle of the unified Purusha-Prakriti. And you can find the intrinsic duality of Purusha and Prakriti clearly shown, for example, as men and women go about in their daily life and multiply themselves in innumerable pairs of boys and girls.

Well, we are in a quandary when we emphasize only the multiple individualities. Then we quarrel. When we come

to the duality, we already have a glimpse of Truth. Further on, fusion gives us the true vision of Unity.

And the whole is excellently symbolized by the picture of the two dolphins.

Furthermore, as regards language, we must be exceedingly careful from the very outset about the following: we must beware of the images produced by the words we use habitually. The ancient Samkhya masters call it mental construction (*vikalpa*), which is a hindrance to the realization of the essence of things.

For instance, when we speak of the root of a thing, meaning its essential nature, we evoke the picture of a tree but we are emphasizing only the bottom and forgetting what is at the top. In fact, what is under the ground is only at a par with what is at the top and shoots up to the sky. The root, trunk, branches, foliages, flowers and fruits all make up the tree, surrounded by infinite space. And when we want to understand what a tree is essentially, we must come to the seed which contains the tree in a shell without differentiating the various parts. The seed is at the centre of the infinity that we have named the Void, without attaching any particular label or feature to it.

One must first have a good idea of this nameless and featureless infinity, which is best symbolized by the sky (*ākāśa*) assuming different densities, such as air, fire, water and earth, according to the old nomenclature. They can be expressed in modern terms, which you will find hinted at in old texts, as non-being or Void, and life-force (both being without any form); light or the matrix of all forms; water or the life-substance to which all matter has to be reduced; earth or the solid matter which is a cluster of innumerable particles forming an organization, for example, our bodies consisting of innumerable cells all of which have a distinct composition and function but which are cooperating to form a vehicle for the spirit. The spirit in its turn is formless and featureless, — a Void.

Here we clearly see the three distinct qualities of density (*gunas*) at play. At the top is *sattva* (meaning in Sanskrit "being-ness" or essential nature); it is the pure aspect of Prakriti upholding Purusha, which is pure Consciousness or Awareness. Below is *rajas*, or the life-energy manifesting the command of Purusha over prakriti. Lastly there is *tamas*, or the inertia making up the body of Purusha.

In the scheme of the five spiritual elements, ether, air, fire, water and earth, *sattva* is represented by the sky and *rajas* by the air and life-energy. Light represents a double principle including formlessness. In meditation we can see with our inner eye the formless Godhead and also, just like the pagans, gods and goddesses emanating from darkness. The element below light is water which is the condensed form of life arising from gross matter. Last of all is the earth or matter itself. So all beings are an organization of spirit, energy and matter in their different aspects.

Now to realize the Void or pure spirit, you have to enter into the domain of mystic sensations behind the elemental sensations. Smell is a primitive sensation common to all with which life starts. It is either good, bad, soft or pungent, etc. Its mystic quality is a fragrance which arouses an ecstatic condition in you, hence the incense burning in temples. The common sensory taste is sweet, bitter, etc. Its mystic counterpart is flavour. The vision of mystic light is usual for all spiritual aspirants. On the ordinary level it is beauty. The mystic quality of touch is revealed in the love-touch. And the mystic quality of sound is revealed through music, which plays such an important role in all religions.

We have to train our ordinary sensations to rise, to expand and also to dive into mystic sensations. Then we will see and feel that all existences are shot through and through by spirit and energy which evolve matter out of their ethereal bodies. Remember that reality is neither one nor many; it is bi-une producing many, the love embrace of Purusha and Prakriti giving birth to the many children of the same bi-une beings. And then the two dolphins will splash energy

in the Void in their frolicsome play!

As one rises in the ascending scale of rarefaction when passing through the different gradations of the five elements, one notices how an intense light between the eyebrows expands into the Void of pure Existence, which holds the unlimited universe in its ambit and remains calm and serene, full of the peace, joy and love that are the essence of all beings. There the Creator and the created are one. One is then the very stuff of reality.

The Samkhya that has been described is not book knowledge. In fact, it is at the core of all religions including even that of the primitive people. The main outlines are clearly described but not in an academic way.

If someone tries to understand not by the intelligence of the mind alone, but also with the intuition of the heart, it will not be very difficult for him or her to get at the central theme. Spiritual experiences rest upon mysticism and mysticism is not anything mysterious. It is simply the assertion of truths which we have covered up with mentally constructed words. It requires a fervour, an elasticity of the intellect, a simplicity of adolescence which sees the Truth directly without being blocked by prejudices. Reduce everything to sensations and then try to get at the sublimity of the expression of the pure Existence which underlies all sensations.

I told you earlier that the simple sensations of hearing, touch, vision, taste and smell have a touch of mysticism in them when they are experienced as music, love, beauty, flavour and fragrance. They have been minutely described by the works on *yoga* based on Patanjali. And he is only an exponent of a very ancient teaching which is transmitted in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* and still lives in Tantrism, Buddhist *sahaja*, and the experiences narrated by the illiterate Bauls and Sants¹ not only in Bengal, but also in the extreme South of India. If you read between the lines, you will find that Christ's teachings are mostly in the fashion of the Bauls.

¹ Large groups of wanderers, well-known in India.

I look upon him as a genuine Baul whose words have captured the hearts of the simple people all over the world. Samkhya is also a way of mysticism and mysticism is nothing if it is not a sublimation of sensations. It will not do only to think about God, but you have to "think-feel" about Him!

Approaching a new dimension really means a total immersion into the Void. You must deeply ponder over this and get its secret clear and deep in your consciousness. There is a process involved which might take a whole lifetime. I give you here some hints:

Analyse a very simple proposition. You look at a child and say, "What a fine child!" It is a matter-of-fact statement. This belongs to the stage of sensation. The child is outside of you and you are looking objectively at him and have only an impression of what he is like.

If your sense of beauty changes into love, you will come to love the child and exclaim, "What a darling!" This is the second stage where an element of emotion enters into you.

If this stage is deeply intensified, you are approaching the third stage and feel as if the child were your own; it becomes really like your own, a child born from your womb as it were. You are then fully identified. The child and you interact upon each other. This is the last stage in the development of a pure sensation.

In the first stage, you simply observe like a scientist. In the second, you are a poet and in the third, a mystic.

A scientist looks at a thing and thinks; but if his heart is moved, he wants to understand the meaning of its working. By doing so he adds something more to what his senses discover. He is approaching a new order of Laws. A poet becomes a mystic when he identifies himself fully with what he sees. In this total identification, space and time come together as in Purusha-Prakriti (or Shiva-*śakti*) and are fused on a mystical plane of consciousness.

Einstein's space-time continuum is on the objective

plane, and so in the first stage of observation. The poet and the philosopher, by adding the element of feeling to it, discover the bi-une reality existing within Purusha-Prakriti, which you might also understand as Shiva-*śakti*.

In the third stage Purusha-Prakriti interact and are in communion with each other till they are fused into One, which is simply the Void. Here space is fused with time and vice versa. We can say that the dolphins then stop playing and melt into each other, forming the matrix of Creation,¹ or that the feared black goddess Kali, representing time, reduces the whole universe into a pulp and swallows it! In other words, the bi-une reality of Purusha-Prakriti melts into the Void.

You can look at an atom through a microscope and infer new forces in it. But can you become the atom? No.

You can know intuitively what an atom is by deep concentration and meditation and by inwardly living and becoming within yourselves the Void. This is what the mystics have done throughout all ages and climes and have reported their findings in a cryptic language peculiar to them. What they have found subjectively by contemplation, in particular the many Laws of the universe, as set forth in the *Vedas* and in the many secret Scriptures of olden times, we are now trying to find "objectively" through science.

To approach a new dimension remains the target of a deep search. Once, in a vision, I saw a pyramid of which I could barely make out the point of the apex, because the lines as seen from afar, did not meet. I wished to climb it.

It took years and years until I climbed it. The pyramid had no top but only a small plateau on which to stand for a short while.

He who climbs this symbolic pyramid is the son of man. But there, in the humility of the mystery, in the barely perceptible expansion of the fifth dimension which shines, everything is turned upside down. The son of man can only say: "Who am I? I am this and 'That' also." In the dying

¹ Bhagavatam.

son of man, a son of God is conceived.

One cannot remain for long at the summit. He who comes down from it knows the space that the wise men have perceived. He also knows that the many years of search in his life were instantly obliterated. Nothing remains but a reflection of immensity, the All and the Nothing, the perfect Void.



PART III

RAMBLING THOUGHTS

Many times, in the evening, we would sit around him
speaking about the Void.
Sometimes there was a deep silence between us.
The air was full of serenity —
life filling the space.
Sometimes he laughed, full of humour,
sometimes he was very serious,
speaking about himself.
Time was flowing in eternity.

Calcutta 1972-1978

When I first came to the Hills, I had a Nepali servant. You can't imagine how conscientious he was! If he was two minutes late in the morning, he refused to take a full day's pay. "If you are two minutes late in the morning, go two minutes later in the evening," I suggested, and that seemed to settle things in his mind.

I used to ask him to share my food at lunchtime. At first he did not want to accept. I gave him whatever I was having and asked him: "Well, how does it taste?" "Oh! it tastes sweet," he answered, however bad the cooking was. If it was good, he repeated: "Oh! it tastes sweet."

Then I thought: "Well, for that boy, the food is neither good nor bad, it is simply sweet. What is Brahman? He is neither good nor bad; he is above everything, he is peace, he is sweet." This simple boy was filled with grace when saying: "Oh! it tastes sweet." I never saw him angry, or in a bad mood of any kind. He was always ready to smile. He was simply blooming in God's light.

You see, his mind was not constantly searching for things to understand and to explain. It does not help much.

You must attain to this simplicity, to this primitiveness in which there are simply densities of various degrees between darkness, blurred vision and clarity and then light. All that has been said and written about the approach to self-observation is only minor work, only the first steps to discovering what inner knowledge really is. Knowledge is simply finding unity in the many. This is what an animal cannot do. It is the privilege of the human being alone. On whatever level of society and whatever level of civilization, man has this property of being able to arrange things around an idea. And that becomes knowledge. As soon as it enters into his being, he finds himself above everything and at the same time inside everything.

What is misleading about knowledge is that you don't see the whole, you see only a part and you think that this

part is the whole. Seen from above, the part belongs to the whole and the whole belongs to the part.

Take the relationship between a mother and a child. There can be no mother without a child, nor a child without a mother. But the relation is that the mother contains the child, the whole of the child, while the child only knows part of the mother. In order to know his mother as his father knew her, he has to grow up. The mother is at mid-point. She looks down upon the child, and then looks up to the father and says: "This child belongs to me, but I belong to you."

To have a clear vision of this situation, to see what is the part and what is the whole, is liberation or pure existence. In a small way, the circle is closed.

2

Rise every morning as if you were born again, breaking completely with the past. Retain your youth and adolescence within you. Do you remember yourself when you were just sixteen, when the portals of mystery were just opening before your wondering eyes? Is that one lost? Can you find him again? Do you know him? Does he know what *is* born with him?

All is there, all around us. We have simply to understand what goes on. That is all. We are then at peace with everything.

If you see life as it is, you captivate the hearts of all those around you; that is the eternal adolescence which is represented by the young boy Krishna and Radha, the girl. Similarly Shri Ramakrishna called his young wife "Shodashi," meaning the "eternal girl of sixteen." He deposited whatever he had achieved in the palm of her hand, saying to her: "I give everything to you." What did that girl know? Nothing! She just loved.

Do you remember the naughty small parrots at Lohaghat? They were so lovely to look at! They would squander all the fruit of a tree in no time. They cackled between themselves: "We are jungle beings! Who does the fruit belong to? God has created the trees for us, as well as the fruit. They belong to us alone! We are not attached to this or that tree. You, human beings, think that everything belongs to you. You spread a net over some of the trees. Never mind, we will fly to other trees and come back later. You can do nothing to stop us!"

Do you remember the English lady, our neighbour, who asked you to watch over her orchard and not to let the village women come and pick her apples. And these simple village women were saying to themselves: "God made the earth, God made the trees, so God is giving us the apples!" And you asked me what you should do: "Should I guard the apples? I can't. I feel as if cut clean in two, my body here, my mind there." So I watched the game going on, your dealing with primitive feelings and, within you, a sense of logic valuable only for the part and not for the whole.

Also in Lohaghat, near the house, there was a spring running through a ravine full of tall ferns. So much water and no flowers! I had never raised flowers, so I decided one day to sow many of them and follow the wonder of their growth. So I left my books and watched over the flowers morning, noon and night, trying to guard them against every possible accident that might threaten them, and there were many. They grew fast with bright colours. They required much of my attention and time: ploughing, manuring, watering, weeding, grafting, shading, as well as love and protection.

They bloomed extravagantly and looked finally like a Persian carpet. One morning, before sunrise, I cut them all and made bouquets of them. Then I carefully turned over the earth and went back to my books. This and That. The world of flowers had filled me forever. I only retain the habit

of keeping one flower in a tiny vase in front of Tara, the goddess of the Void.

To play the game of life is one thing, to know that one is playing it is quite another thing. The Baul's role is to remain above the habitual level of thought.

Never fail to watch the game! If you have a witness-consciousness, you can be aware of what is going on in the players and in the onlookers and laugh at the same time.

Life being made up of many and varied episodes, gradually you are moulded by what takes place. Imagine that an enormous blacksmith with a huge hammer — call him God — is looking at us. He throws some of us into the fire and when we are red hot, he gives shape to what was shapeless! While we are still red hot he dips us into the water. So raw material becomes fine steel and that is "inner discipline!" At one end the steel is condensed, at the other one, rarefied and we become a really useful tool.

4

Well, the Creator made a great mistake at the very outset by creating the human being neither fully animal nor fully human! As we are constituted with three twists in the spinal column, we have to consider that we have also twists in our thinking! Our spinal column is not straight like the stem of a lotus that rises from mud to heaven. Were it but straight, our consciousness would be different and would easily follow a straight line!

For this reason many Indian *yogis* affirm that if you can teach people to sit cross-legged, straight, still and stiff, looking inside right along the spinal column, then, when the physical pain has stopped, a strange light in the mind will occur.

In the West, you speak of solar plexus, thymus, pineal and other glands which are really the *cakras* along the spine as represented by the different lotuses. What is real is that this strange light which is stored at one end of the spinal

column can move to the other pole of the being. This is again expressed in the theory of the Logos in the Bible: "... in the beginning was the Word", the fact of existence. One can create a complicated science for the mind about this process; one can discuss the possibility of proving that such light exists and this has been done by attaching electrodes to the skull and recording the movements of the brain. There is a lot of dabbling along that line, using fragments of ancient teachings to read aloud and people are delighted to listen.

We see that people, especially young people, are ready now to plunge into a dense forest of different teachings, in search of something they feel they lack. They are looking for knowledge, for self-knowledge.

Inner growth needs time. At first the mere idea of it will make them softer. Instead of being dispersed, their energy will turn around an axis. It will help them to establish a new relationship with themselves and with others. This is the basis for all community living. "I myself am alive and, at the same time, I respect your right to live. I have the right to live, and therefore so do you." With such words, their field of communication will expand, but if they continue to think in the ordinary cruel way, nothing will change.

We have to create a coordination between all these feelings. Gandhi spoke of *ahimsā*, of non-violence: "At the cost of your life don't be violent to others." Then the question arises: If someone is unjustly violent toward another person, have I any right to object? Have I any right to give him a good thrashing and make him stop his violence? Where do I stand? This question is dealt with in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Well, yes, we do have the right to object but under this condition: that we ourselves do not get upset or ruffled; that we remain calm and don't lose ourselves. The whole pattern of social behaviour implies the attitude of a surgeon who is called to lance a boil. He knows he is inflicting pain on a patient, but he does it, with a calm mind, not to hurt but to relieve suffering. This aim can be attained only if we

act knowing that harmony is to be found in just two ways: first in a mother's heart, and then in the calmness of a father's look. Do you have these two? Here we are back in Samkhya, facing the principles of Prakriti and Purusha. We are returning to the idea of self-knowledge.

First of all you have to discover, within yourself, whether you are predominantly man or woman. Among the males, in the body of a man, a woman may in reality be living. Shri Ramakrishna pointed it out. He said: "What is in me is not really male, it is female; a woman has melted into me. But what is in Swami Vivekananda¹ is fully male!" This factor of predominance you will find throughout the whole of creation. Of these two attitudes, one appears to be rigid, staring into nudity, into the Void, ready to face the mystery of death; the other is just moonlight at play, serene and soft.

Each *Upanishad* expresses it in a different way:

"This play of the many,
let it subside,
just as at eventide
everyone subsides into sleep."

Every night, I hear the noises subside. The whole city of Calcutta appears to me like an infant sleeping; it fills my heart with peace. "I am That. I am that I am." This is self-realization or knowledge of the self.

One day, this knowledge is going to save the world. People who possess this knowledge will grow in number, first independently, here one, there another; then they will become coordinated. Then there may be a flood, or something similar, and they will have to separate and start again. This will go on, say for millions of years, until gradually they reach some steadiness.

But one single soul can have the total vision of this and know what may appear in fifteen million years or so. It exists already in me! Then I smile. I am an artist, I am a poet, I

¹ Narendra Nath Datta (1860-1902) who founded the Ramakrishna Mission at Belur, Calcutta.

am a philosopher, I am God the philosopher, God the artist — God in everything!

Now let us speak of self-knowledge starting from the fundamental mistake the Creator made! Actually the human being is built to go on all fours, his spine parallel to the earth and not erect. How can we try to correct this position?

This is where the yogic discipline says: "Just sit straight. Close your eyes and try to feel the spinal column as straight. Forget that it is not straight. Imagine that it is straight!" Gradually you will feel a lightness and also that heat is being generated. Your temperature rises. If on a winter night you sit erect outside in the cold, even if you shiver and whine like a puppy, you will feel heat being produced within you. That is an old Tibetan teaching. They undertook by sitting straight to produce sufficient body heat to dry a sheet soaked in ice-cold water. It is said that Milarepa, in one sitting, was able to dry four wet blankets. A strange thing!

For us, more simply, to sit straight, still and rigid, eyes closed, is to be living truly within. Deep concentration takes place. What appears to you as a speck or a point of light becomes a globe. Go deeper, then you begin to feel three things at the same time: a vast calmness, a deep vital energy and an illumination. The three together. Taken separately, they are the three *gunas* or the three densities working in your inner being which keep you enslaved. Together and coordinated they mean freedom and liberation.

To sit straight is to think straight. It is a severe discipline, that of self-knowledge. You must sit straight, die straight, with no crookedness and no bending. This speck of knowledge means a lot; a whole life is needed to strive after and attain it.

That is quite enough! Then you are open, waiting for eternity. Eternity is a non-negative concept, it is a positive one. We all want a glimpse of eternity. We can merge into it. Then we know that it exists, that it is the only thing that makes you capable of loving, of enduring things, of becoming

pliable with yourself, with others, with every being, to live in every being, even in an ant, in a worm, in a tree. The same soul, the same God. "The soul in me is the soul in everything."

What can exist except life? Only life exists! Inside it is life, outside it is life. And that life is energy. Feel it deep, very deep within yourself. You will then find that things will come to you all together, spontaneously. It is not by thinking but rather by not thinking.

All this you know, deep in yourself. If you know it consciously, you become a starting-point. Perhaps you are only a repetition. I say repetition, but repetitions will come and go until everything is clear. You will even hear people shout: "These are all faked things; we don't want them anymore. We want new ideas, new things." But do you not see that the same things are endlessly repeated? You, me, all of us are nothing but repetitions!

5

Now comes the time to speak of self-disciplines. We shall speak of making the memory light, and of fasting. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, it is said:

"If you make pure what you take into yourself, whether as food or thought, then your essence becomes pure and you reach pure memory, universal memory — the only thing that has to be remembered."

To progress you must definitely follow these disciplines. Once you reach universal memory all ties are dropped.

Those moments of purity are like beams of light which appear to you as tiny dots of light. Many people have seen some of them during their life-time. Only they don't know how to connect them, deluded as they are by the Scriptures and different teachings.

To see them one day as a continuous line of light, one must first think of every dot of light as independent one from the other, but at the same time see that each dot is self-

repeating. The dots of light are all of the same nature — they are light.

Here come the facts known to science about the queen bee, which can serve as a parable. On a very clear and sunlit morning, the queen bee comes out of her hive. Immediately, all around her, there is something like a signal going through the many hives. All the workers swarm out, and also the drones, flying high in her direction. Between the drones there is a race, but finally only one clutches the queen bee, clings to her. Then he zooms higher and higher. But soon his limbs drop off and fall, one by one, like the petals of a flower in full bloom. By that one contact, the queen bee becomes productive for the whole of her life and lays millions upon millions of eggs. In the *Tantras*, she is named Devi on that account. She is also called *Śakti*, a wonder of light and power. She is at the same time queen bee, drone and worker. She is self-generating and self-repeating. She is a pattern of the universe. Would you call it one or would you call it many? You can't say!

Similarly the dots of light by repeating themselves will come to form a line of light. Just look at them longingly, with a strong inner desire. But no clinging, no forcing! Simply look, without attachment and they will go on coming! They will form a line and separate again, come again and separate again. They will be playing with you!

Inasmuch as you can become a witness to their play, you are free, and you catch sight of the real thing. Nothing faked, nothing imaginary but ultimately only what is real.

It is not really a difficult discipline, but we lack the simplicity of a child that is required in order to approach it. But somehow, once you fall in love with it, you can't do without it because it gives you a creative power within yourself.

Another self-discipline is fasting, which is much harder. If you pursue the idea of reaching an ideal you come to the technique of fasting. The point is to be self-sufficient, not to take in anything, to feel indivisible — I am what I am — and use nothing from the many. And so for a while the

body becomes a cannibal and uses up the stored energy; it gets hungry, famished and feeds upon itself. If it is strong enough, it goes beyond that, perhaps crosses the normal limit of a long fast. By fasting you know that you have received a given amount of energy. You can use it up knowing that you can replenish it with food and thus it will apparently remain a constant. But in this, you are mistaken! If you actually go, say for three days, without food, just to feel what hunger is like, it will open another dimension in your thoughts, perhaps unknown to you until then.

After pursuing this line of investigation for a while, you know what fasting means for you. You must be consciously aware of it. You discover that your consciousness acts just like a barometer. Without food, it goes down and down. And then a darkness comes. With food, it goes up and up, and light comes and you see. You see *there* and you see *here*. The vision is always there, even when you close your eyes. On the higher plane, it is the omniscience of God; on the lower plane, which is ours, it is the Law of sympathy. I feel for my child, I feel for my friend, I feel for a lame man. It is simply putting oneself in the position of others and trying to be just like them. Then gradually that total vision will become inexpressible. There is no way to express it, it can only be felt. And then "everything tastes sweet," as my little Nepali servant used to say.

6

All great sages have followed an eastern discipline of fasting. It is known that the Christ observed a fast for forty days in the desert. We know nothing of his regular discipline with food. But fasting has always been regarded as a necessity in spiritual life.

Many scientific investigations have been made regarding the transformation of food in the body. We have chemical studies, charts and statistics about the amount of proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, etc., which are needed, but next

to nothing is known about the psychological effects of food: what makes you feel heavy, dull, drowsy, restless, passionate, aggressive, serene, cheerful or self-poised. When you eat you immediately feel a surge of energy in the body. The "intake" of food means strength; but it also means sex. For better or for worse nobody cares to know anything about the "transubstantiation" which takes place.

You must now study carefully the relation in yourself between food and impulsion, food and feelings. So choose your food carefully and take only the quantity you need. Pay special attention to this last question. This discipline has to be followed meticulously.

The Buddhists and the Moslems have created artificial measures to help themselves. An established rule naturally sustains an effort by applying the mind to it. Thus the Buddhist must never eat after midday; the Moslem observes strictly a long fast, during the month of Ramzan, from sunrise to sunset. But both, at other times, can eat as much as they like. Many other more balanced disciplines could be mentioned.

Any kind of dogmatism in a spiritual programme is an artificial measure, because the only valuable relation to be discovered is then falsified. The discipline of fasting is individual and can only begin when one has a clear idea of the experience to be approached. The right attitude towards the whole thing requires a thorough study of the link existing between the body and the spirit.

Many fast in order to obtain an external effect, as, for example, to influence the feelings of others. Gandhi's fasts may have appeared to be of that kind, but in reality he fasted to have the inner strength to challenge the resistance to his endeavours. Fasting to attract attention has nothing spiritual in itself. A conscious fast is for keeping the "channel of energy" open. It is rarely followed except by those who can no longer live without a clear consciousness of inner purity. It is never advertised.

By fasting, I do not mean only the fact of not eating for

a certain period, but of becoming aware of the reactions of the inner being, of controlling the impulses when no longer sustained by the energy coming from food. Is there not a finer energy to be recognized? The inner being is aware of what goes on, feels at ease or suffers because the play of the two dolphins does not stop. It cannot stop since it is life itself.

There is some confusion about the quality of food necessary and whether it should be vegetable or animal in origin. Of course, food has much to do with the building up of the mind. But there are some naive people who imagine: "If I eat a cat, I risk becoming catlike!" And so they decide to become strict vegetarians when they want to follow a spiritual life. But this is obviously too simple a solution. Actually, it is one's attitude toward food which determines its spiritual nature.

I do not remember if I ever told you the strange story of a fakir who wondered a lot about this question of fasting. He was living near a desert where there was a deep dry well. One day he caught, at random, some monkeys, old and young ones and threw them all into the well.

For the first few days, he threw some food down, upon which he heard violent fighting and shrieking. Then he stopped throwing food. For many days, the shrieking and hissing went on. Then it stopped.

The fakir thought: "They must all be dead." Then he peered over the edge of the well. No movement. No sound.

Tied to a rope, he let himself down and saw a mass of dead bodies, partly dismembered, savagely contorted. But on a stone which was jutting slightly out of the wall, there sat a small monkey, his arms wrapped tightly around his body, his eyes wide open staring at nothing.

The fakir seized hold of it and stroking its head, took it back to his hut.

As the days went by, the monkey began to show strange miraculous powers. It could not speak, but it understood whatever the fakir said to it. It could see into the past and

into the future as well. When asked a question about anyone the fakir pointed to, it would answer correctly in dumb-show, as in a silent movie.

This may only be a parable. But it illustrates the great Truth that control over the crude animal impulses helps to bring out the spiritual energies dormant within us.

7

Fasting is hard because it involves our heavy body in its basic matter. According to tradition, this basic matter is named carbon, and it is said that the rays of the sun are imbedded in it. On the other hand, the geologists tell us that the diamond, which is the symbol of light, is nothing other than carbon. From where nobody knows, a tremendous pressure came upon it and changed the arrangement of the atoms. The carbon began to glow and became light. The whole of the Buddhist discipline speaks of the change within us from matter to light. It is called the *Path of the Diamond*. For the Christians it is the birth of Christ within the inner being. The mission of Christ is to crush the heavy matter and fashion the inner being to His own likeness which is light.

The conversion of the inner being can be described as an attempt to lift a huge stone, to make it stand on end and then fall on the other side. At first you have to put forth immense strength just to lift it. It rises very slowly. Then the moment it is erect, it requires only a light "touch and go" and over it goes! So the toil on this side is compensated for by there being no toil at all on the other side! This illustrates the conversion of the soul from carbon to diamond! That was also the teaching of Yajnavalkya.¹ He said: "All your thirsting for knowledge and all your efforts are simply your toiling along that path. The moment will come when this will be a 'touch and go' affair: a sudden change will take place. Then you will find everything so easy; all that

¹ A ṛṣi who lived in Mithila, 8th century B.C.

you were searching for outside of yourself was there all the time!"

This is called: know thyself. Do not be afraid of the darkness of the self that you discover. It appears perhaps coal black! People become afraid. Many drop out and few reach the end. There is the problem of infinite within infinity. Words like "so much, so many" do not exist. A very subtle point is that, when we say "infinity" we think that it must be somewhere where there is nothing finite, and infinity is beyond that!

When you are afraid, you no longer know how to think. You wander all over the place saying: "I give up all hope." In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, it is said:

"I surrender myself to you....

You open your own self to Me....

I have heard so many things

I don't want to hear any more.

I have seen so many things

I don't want to see any more.

I reveal Thyself, I reveal Thyself!"

It is like the revelation of Christ.

Fear and harshness within us should dissolve, but alas, the personality is so strong! It gets encrusted with so many things, all exterior things. Imagine two children, a brother and a sister born within a year of each other. I have seen many such pairs. They are so loving. They quarrel and love, love and quarrel, but cannot live without each other. That is a simple beginning of life, but then you begin to teach them many false things; "to behave correctly," to do this and that, not through the influence of your presence, but through words, dead words taken from books, and you lose the main thing, the life-touch in knowledge!

That life-touch is the infinite patience one must have with people. This patience is a mission in itself, it is God's own gift. Then you live in infinity and nothing else matters.

Remember that God is infinite, infinitely patient with you.
Here is a verse from the *Isha Upanishad*:

“Beyond, there is all fullness,
Down here, it is all fullness,
And from that fullness
If you take away the fullness
Still the fullness bubbles
and spills on earth.”

What a wonderful way of putting things; with what depth it was written!

Shri Ramakrishna liked it. He said: “Well, you go to draw water from the ocean of life. The pitcher will float. It won’t take in the water. You have to hold it by the neck and thrust it down. At first you hear: ‘Glub, glub, glub....’ it wants to reject the water: ‘No, no, no, I won’t, I won’t.’ Then it becomes filled and stops. Only then it knows: an ocean inside, an ocean outside!”

We are also made like that, with a small ocean inside and a large ocean outside. That is why we can go beyond sorrow. But how we do resist God! Like the pitcher we say: “No, no, no.” It is by force that the Master has to put the pitcher down into the water. We don’t allow the infinite ocean to come in.

Shri Ramakrishna also said: “The good Guru is a good physician; he doesn’t come and say: ‘Well, here is a prescription for you.’ No, he brings the medicine to you and thrusts it down your throat so that you are purified from within. He does it with a harshness that is real love.”

The heart is the cradle of love and love is not what sex is. Even a couple in whom sex predominates will sometimes experience shining moments when they know what love is. There is a quality of feeling which is finer by far than the

coarseness of sex. It is a very fine spiritual feeling. This feeling blooms first in the heart of the woman. The future mother, before procreation, or even at the very outset of the process of procreation, may be as much intoxicated as the future father. They both experience a kind of madness.

But when the child is born, and even before, when the mother feels the child moving in her womb, her heart melts. But this is rarely shared by the father. He may care so little that it means nothing to him if he runs after another woman! This is the theme of innumerable stories written in the East and in the West. The same thing everywhere!

So this is an important point for the woman to realize fully. By remaining in *prakriti*, she, unlike the man, has full control over her own manifestation. When the child is born, and she nurses it, well, she experiences a taste of what ecstasy actually is.

Did I tell you the story of a girl I knew? This girl was living with a very bad man. Once when I was passing through Calcutta she asked me to come to her house. I went to meet her and saw that she wore the red sign of a married woman.¹ I said: "How is this? I didn't know that you were married!"

"I belong to this household now," she answered.

"But you didn't let me know about it."

"I was ashamed then, but now I am very happy!"

After a year, she bore a child. As I was passing again through Calcutta, I went to her house, but there I saw something horrible. The girl was lying half unconscious on the floor and the child beside her was dead. Both had been struck down by Asiatic cholera. She opened her eyes and said: "Oh! have you come, Rishida? Oh! bring back my child alive to me. He has been dead for quite some time." She was half mad with grief.

I said to her: "No use grieving. Perhaps you will forget him and again bear a child. But if you are true to your love, then cherish his memory. Just make him your Guru and do conquer all this grief." She listened to me, and from then

¹ A red line on her head where the hair is parted.

on, the dead child became her little Gopal.¹ At last I went softly away from her house.

Now she is a school-mistress in a Mofussil town. Her treasure is hidden in a small box; it is an image of Gopal. And she has said to me: "This is my little child who came back to me and I see him in so many faces around me no matter whether they are boys or girls." So her grief was turned into an expansion of love.

Can you bring people to that stage, to pure love, to the inner centre of the heart? Love illumines the heart, and above the heart there is another centre located between the eyebrows from where all commands come; it is pure wisdom. If you concentrate there you first get a luminosity which is like a scorching ray which burns everything and burns all dirt out of you and makes you as pure as light.

So this is the way to find the centre of the heart and to go higher to pure wisdom. From this to that, and from that to this, such is the movement of *śakti*. When you go still further, you find a complete circle with its circumference nowhere. And that is the power of Brahma, or God, whatever you like to call it. You are searching for something which apparently doesn't exist, but really that alone exists. You turn your back on it and so you are harsh, cruel, selfish and greedy. You run after things like a beggar when you should sit like an emperor on your throne and let things come to you. Why should you care? From this comes the strange fact that in India a *sādhu*, who is a wandering monk following a strict discipline, is given the kingly title of Maharaj!

The possibility of living in that way is not for everyone. But anyone who has but a grain of faith can make a good beginning, and that faith will grow and bring him to wisdom and Truth.

If that grain of faith is faith in the Truth from which the whole universe springs, then it is sure to grow from a seed to a flower, because such is the Law. We are just beginning

¹ The pet name of the child Krishna.

to understand what Truth is, and we are still groping in darkness. But if you go on insisting that *That* does not exist, what can I say? Only this: "I have faith in you and I know that you too are not without it." Faith is a very great thing. It is seeded in man and will one day move mountains. I can only wait.

Faith grows from your own obedience, from your own discovery. It sits quietly near you and doesn't say anything; it simply touches you. And you will forget it and whine; then you have faith in your not having faith! It appears as a constant nullity which comes again and again. But faith is very patient. It just waits and gives you a little push! This faith is life and knowledge. They are very near to one another: knowledge must be living and life must be knowing. One cannot separate the two.

And you can learn this by a very simple experience of making your mind a blank. Let it remain a blank for a time. Try to feel what blankness is like. When you face blankness and enter into it, your whole body becomes numb. Then you suddenly discover that you are nothing but so many pounds of flesh lying there, with no feeling anywhere. Everything is numb. But there, suddenly in the head, there is a light; this light grows and you feel a pain. Phew! — an acute pain! It pierces your body. A minute later, it disappears and you are quiet again. What is all this?

Was it only a possibility of sensation, in any part of the body, at any time? But through this very possibility, we come to know that a light is dormant in everybody and can suddenly awaken. Because it is so very close to us, it is important to "remember" — as the mystics say. By this they mean not the memory of events but the memory of the eternal Truth. Then you will understand how a tiny seed expands. This is life.

If you put a pebble here on the soil, it does not expand. If you bring another pebble and still another one, the process continues and will gradually form a heap of pebbles. This will not change by itself and will remain the same for millions

of years. Whereas if you put a grain of barley in moist soil, it immediately begins to suck up the moisture and swells. This is life!

But in man, a three dimensional action starts on account of his awareness. It is this three dimensional existence that he can learn to discover. From the outside nothing is noticeable. First there is the unconscious or sleep state, the dream state and the waking state.

From the third state, one can reach the fourth one; then the totality of states one, two, three and four means pure Existence (*sat*). The fifth will be a fullness, a wholeness. Where is the proof? Well, just see, you will find the proof in your own self. The Law of expansion immediately begins to work: the whole becomes like a globe and in it there is an infinite stretch of space dotted with points of light. You can count them by millions and millions. And when it grows so big that you cannot swallow it, then it bursts!

9

People are very loath and unwilling to analyse themselves; perhaps in the subconscious they have a fear that bad things will come out of it, — just as, in writing an autobiography, one is full of self-praise and won't speak of the ills that are deeply hidden. People are never honest in their diaries, but they are honest in the mosaic pattern they are composing!

Self-analysis is most important. I might say that three-fourths of Samkhya is self-analysing. It is said: "Always go on analysing bits of your life."

Of course self-analysis discloses the idea of having caused or done some wrongs — but speaking from the standpoint of Samkhya, it also means: "I am aloof, I am analysing myself without any judgement." That is a very great ideal which we have to reach. And I try to explain this to those who come to me. I say: "Look into yourself; there, deep in you, something gives you a blow. It is like a flash of light. Let it look at all the impure things which are hidden, but

don't nourish them! If you have to kill them, kill them mercilessly! Don't pamper yourself!"

But I find it very hard.

Why do people pamper their own self? Here Samkhya gives a very clear answer. It is because there is a sort of "I-ness" in them, with a whitewashed ego which should no more be recognized! That "I-ness" clad with self-pride says: "Yes, yes, I know...." And that ruins you!

True, when one day, in a state of inner realization, you reach the Purusha and look at yourself from there, you don't see whether you are good or whether you are bad, because no duality appears. It is only when you step down into your own being that prakriti and duality reappear.

In manifestation, one breaks into two in the realm of contradictions. But if prakriti wafts you back into the Purusha, a word can express that state, described in Sanskrit accordingly as: "bi-unity," two being one.

10

God or "the Word," as the *Gospel* says, becomes flesh. The *Vedas* say: "The Word is but a vibration in the Void." So the Creation starts from the word: *Aum*.

You blow a conch shell, you beat a drum. Have you ever seen a snake-charmer? He holds a small revolving drum, giving two very quick beats: creation — destruction! And so long as it continues the snake dances!

Most people feel these two beats in themselves. One this way, one that way; one positive, one negative. "How can we bring them together?" they will ask. Only a few may have heard that two beats, like two strings, can vibrate faster and faster, until finally there is only one humming!

Think also of the two dolphins always sporting together! They come together, sport and play, faster and faster. Then they melt away and there is nothing more!

There also, we can say that Purusha and Prakriti clasp each other in a tight embrace and disappear in sleep. In the

depth of sleep what are Purusha and Prakriti? The Void contains both of them: This and That.

Around any word, deed, work, imagery, feeling, there is always an oscillation which makes you undecided about what to do, what to think. We doubt. Am I to go this way? But at the same time I wish to go that way. This oscillation is in the very nature of prakriti; we cannot avoid it. It is the play of Creation!

All that constant going and coming remains within you as the source from which you speak. You will find out, by and by, that you are always seeing new things, saying new things, that you are never repeating anything. But at the same time, it is always the same thing that you are speaking of but in so many different ways! Such is the mystery of Creation.

There is a simile written in Sanskrit which says: "I have a Truth, just like a plum in the palm of my hand. Do you want a taste of it? Here, I give you a bite! A tiny bit of knowledge has as tremendous a power as a tiny drop of venom."

What power is it? The power of Truth!

11

Yes, *yoga* is union, the union of the individual with the universal. It is the universal containing the individual. Likewise, a spark has a centre from which it originates but it cannot contain itself within itself. It simply expands, this way and that way, in every direction — until it becomes a globe. Then polarity exists: a dark globe and a white globe existing together, intermingling, held one within the other by the same axis.

When we are successful, we are also bound to have some suffering and when we are suffering, we are also bound to enjoy some success. But gradually these impressions become very thin, and finally they melt. So one can say: nothing really exists, which also means everything exists.

At the beginning of the search, we revolt against that process, but as long as we revolt we cannot feel anything. What is it that rebels? Only the material being, the life force, the mental force, the mental constructions, all that we have been taught to think from our childhood. Nobody is let alone to grow like a tree. It is as if one tree said to another tree: "Grow just like me!"

When this period of revolt subsides, then you understand that there is but *one* existence. There is one God, one matter, one Purusha, one Prakriti, but it takes a long time to discover these dimensions.

We must be very alert, constantly watching the tiniest movement within ourselves. The way to go is very long, but suddenly everything becomes so unimaginably quick within us that one cannot even believe it. Nothing escapes you. There is great compensation for all the trouble you have taken!

Here we have a mathematical problem to consider. In the wholeness of pure Existence, which appears to us like a globe dotted with millions of sparks of light, one here, one there, another here and further on — how many can you count? You don't know. But immediately when you become very fine — one spark among them — you feel a kinship with the others and a tremendous energy-power within you. Then all things around you evaporate into pure light and there is only one will, God's will: "Let there be light, and there was light."

When the supreme knowledge has been perceived, there is the wish to go on, but at the same time you see absolutely no difference between going on or coming back. The same organism is to be found here and there, always propelling towards the Cosmos. When you come back to people who understand nothing, you are gentle with them and you bear with them. I have often seen that it takes thirty years to reach a soul! Many devotees have a kind of fascination, come again and again, only to go away and come again, and not understand. Then one day, suddenly, they say: "Oh! now I

know!" And after that they disappear because their quest is finished!

Our common pilgrimage toward the beyond is endless. The Void, being the cradle of birth and death, in itself means creation. It includes complete fullness and, at the same time, total solitude. It is freedom in the true sense of the word! You are free to live, free to die, free to experience pain and pleasure. All things come to you as to a child. You are taken to a wonderland where things are shown to you.

It is like an alternating rhythm with a definite strata continually moving, continually living, in which death is freedom. The pilgrimage toward the inner being binds us to speak about death or to have it constantly in the background of our thoughts.

12

Jagannath in Puri is made of neemwood. The log of wood from which the first images were made came floating on the ocean. The priests got hold of the log and turned it into the images which are worshipped in the big Temple of Puri. They are hideous. Every twelve years, they must be renewed and the old ones burned.

Just before the end of the prescribed time, the priests and the carpenters are busy reconstructing the new images behind the main altar, hidden from the public eye. When the day of installation comes, the head priest has his eyes blindfolded seven times, according to a sacred measure from the *Vedas*, and is ushered into the dark room where the main image of Jagannath, which is black, representing the Void, Vishnu and the sky is kept.

In its centre, there is a closed, hidden cavity. The priest opens its small door and withdraws something from it. Nobody knows what it is, not even himself. He does not see it. He only feels it. He must not speak about it. This "something" is Brahma-the-Creator turned into something palpable called *brahmavastu*. It is said that the priest who transfers

the *brahmavastu*, the secret heart of the old statue, into the new one must die within three years from that very day. He is generally very old, no longer in charge of the Temple. He lives in retirement, waiting patiently for his end. The newly elected priest is doomed to the same functions, as well as to die within the prescribed time. It has always been so and continues to be so.

Outside, there is a great gathering because it is the day of the "new incarnation of the Lord," which will not recur for the next twelve years. Twelve is the number which represents the sun, its course and the whole pattern of the universe. In Vedic times, the year was the unit of time, the seasons of life following the track of twelve months, as well as plants, flowers and fruits.

The Temple of Puri is open to all except to foreigners. There is no distinction of castes. On one special day in the year, very primitive people who live in the heart of the Orissa forests come to the Temple. They call to the god: "Jagannath, thou art our friend, our kinsman." They become mad, exuberant, embrace the image. The priests say: "Well, we got 'This' from you primitive people!"

When you go to Jagannath, you are always prepared to make a vow, to sacrifice something dear to the god, something that you love best of what you are accustomed to eat. You have a last taste of it, then you offer it to the god. After that, back at home, it should never be eaten again.

Food is sacrificed because food is life. One needs one's daily food. At the same time, it is a close and constant reminder of one's dedication to the god.

13

The Golden Rule is: minimize your activity, dive deep within yourself; then when you are firmly established in that steadiness, start working. Your work will then be like a flowering of what comes from your depth.

All around there are things, but the values we put on

them are simply fictitious. What is valuable for you is not valuable for me. Let the young have their own way. But you — you remain free. But don't show that you are free. People might kill you. They would crucify you, like they did Christ.

The people who come to you, are they free? No; and do they wish to be free? If you give them freedom, they will not understand it. You have to wait for a long long time. But certainly, the awakening will some day come from within.

Gods and goddesses are the bond between religion and art. They are specimens of art, expressions in freedom but at the same time submitted to many rules dictated by tradition.

Tagore, who was a Brahmo,¹ could not bow to any image, but he wrote many hymns and created many forms of worship. In his School of Art at Shantiniketan, there was a festival of the earth, trees, water, seasons, a real worship of prakriti in a primitive way, with music, dances and acting. If you come to such primitiveness, you get Truth, because Truth is naked.

So it is a naked stone which represents Shiva, the best representation of all! Jagannath in Puri is the second best because he is hideous and only an idea. So you are not tied to a beautiful thing. It is just an aspect of Truth. In itself, Truth is neither ugly nor beautiful; it is simply what it is. In that way, throwing away all things, you come to the Void, to the nudity without form. You reach Truth and then laugh or smile, you laugh when alone and you smile with others. They won't understand you, but you understand them quite well and love them.

14

Well, I am recognized by the laymen, but very much less by the *pandits*.² Freedom is a word that troubles them. They

¹ The name of a religious group with a unitarian tendency, founded in 1828 and very influential, especially in Bengal.

² A learned man, knowing the sacred texts.

simply won't understand. They frown upon the idea of freedom. They say: "What you express is not written in the books. Tell us what you stand for? If you are a teacher, if you have received a doctor's degree from the University, then what is it for?" Others ask: "According to what are you teaching?"

I am teaching according to Truth!

Yes, I am teaching according to what I feel, and I find the same attitude expressed in some very ancient texts. The old teachers were quite free.

Lately, I was revising Patanjali¹ without referring to the well known *Commentaries*. I took the *Aphorisms* one by one, and meditated upon each one. This very day, I made a strange discovery. I discovered that I have always felt as I feel now, but I did not see it because the commentators stood like a wall in front of me. I could not get past them. Only this morning I found a peculiar *sūtra* echoing this: "if the Purusha and Prakriti are both crystal pure, this is solitude and freedom or living alone." What is that but a spiritual existence in which Purusha and Prakriti are one?

There Purusha is taken as an ideal eternally pure, and prakriti, as the power of Purusha, is bound to come down into matter to create. When this is done, she goes up again. In coming down she creates out of herself a darkness, the matrix in which every possibility takes the form of a seed. When the seed sprouts, a tiny plant will grow into a tree which, in sacred texts, is called "the tree of Brahma." In other parts of the world, the same tree is called "the tree of life." In India, the tree of Brahma is pictured as the *aśvattha* tree (banyan), which grows upside down with fine roots going up into the sky and heavy roots plunging down into the earth. That tree is partly in the sky and partly in the earth. That's life!

Teaching according to Truth is sometimes disturbing people in their thoughts. Well, I will tell you a story about

¹ Author of the *Yoga-Sutras*, renowned for his *Aphorisms*. 2nd Century B.C.

Shri Ramakrishna. You know that the idea of rebirth is basic in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Everyone speaks of rebirth. Now somebody asked Shri Ramakrishna, while he was the guest in a friend's house: "What is your opinion about rebirth?"

"I don't know," he answered. "Since the *rsis* have spoken about it, it might be true."

"Then you don't believe in it?"

"I don't know."

"Well, men will have a poor opinion of you if you do not believe in rebirth." Then Shri Ramakrishna flared up: "What do I care for publicity? I only speak of what I know."

The same question was put to Ma Anandamayee. She answered: "It is there if you believe in it. It is not there if you don't believe in it."

Such freedom is not bound to any dogma. Do the followers of Shri Ramakrishna, of Ma Anandamayee realize such freedom? No, they don't look up to their Master but down at their books. The books are no doubt of great help because they have been written by very great people. But whenever you speak, you spoil the thought; whenever you think, you spoil the intuition; whenever you try to be intuitive, you kill your perception. So remain nude in the Void. Then things will come to you.

At one *Kumbha Mela*,¹ a saint was crying and praying aloud the whole day: "Oh Father, let us all become your children!" What a great prayer! Really we are all children of light and love — but we quarrel and fight, and yet that great prayer is Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Moslem at heart.

We discover things little by little.

And my present philosophy is that there is never an end to the quest. It is always an exploration and when I am at the end of what I thought it is not the end all! I see a light ahead in the beyond! You come then to the theory of expansion into the universe.

¹ A great religious gathering of wandering monks and ascetics held every three years, by rotation in Hardwar, Allahabad, Ujjain and Nasik.

Never say that there is an end. Go, go on! If you say: "There is an end," you become self-satisfied. Don't let yourself be closed in by churches and dogmas. Even meditation can create a dogma of its own.

One day Shri Ramakrishna gave a fine demonstration to "M."¹ of how he was breaking dogmas. They were both seated with eyes closed meditating, "M." on the floor, Shri Ramakrishna on his bed with the mosquito net down. After a few minutes, Shri Ramakrishna came out from behind the net and said: "Well, I didn't like that way of meditating. Can I see God only in this way and not in another way, first closing and then opening my eyes?"

Some years ago, I heard Sri Aurobindo say: "I never close my eyes in meditation." Then I thought: "This is another dogma. Why not meditate with closed eyes as well as with open eyes?"

All bondages, whatever they are, imprison our real nature. Then I remembered the story of a sage, Ashtavakra, who was "bent in eight parts of his limbs." He was a cripple. He became a cripple while he was in his mother's womb. One day his father was reciting the *Vedas* before his wife. The unborn child said: "Father, you are not reciting quite correctly." Well, the father took it very much to heart and said aloud: "You fool, even before being born, you come to teach me! Remain as crooked as you are now in your mother's womb!" The child was born that way, but he became a great saint. And he taught: "This is your bondage that you are trying to get a *samādhi*!² Wherever your mind goes there is *samadhi* for you."

Well, there is *samadhi* thus and so, there is *samadhi* lying, there is *samadhi* sitting, there is *samadhi* standing, there is *samadhi* working. Then I understood why the *Bhagavad Gita* speaks of a steady wisdom. There can be a *samadhi* when speaking, roaming about, and doing things, as well as remaining quiet. One can move, live and have one's own

¹ Mahendra Nath Gupta, one of his faithful followers.

² The state of ecstasy, of union with the Divine.

being in God. Such samadhi is an active contemplation.

When I got back to my ashram years ago, after I had finished my university courses, something strange came upon me and stayed with me for three days and three nights. I was as if dreaming, a "dream-thing." One of the elders saw that strangeness in my eyes and reported it to the Guru. He looked intently at me and said: "You are not yourself."

"I don't know."

He said to somebody: "Well, he has come back from his studies, but I think that he will be escaping me, he has such a look and moves about as if in a dream. What use shall I have of him?"

I heard about it and thought: "Well, he does not understand me." The same night I went to him and asked him: "If I trust you, shall I be saved? Can you guarantee that?"

He spoke very softly to me: "Well, my boy, as you have dedicated everything to me, so I dedicate everything to you, this ashram, this whole institution!"

Of course I melted before those words. I said: "I shall never betray you, but I tell you that the moment I am told to do things which are not in our dedication, I won't remain in your ashram." Twelve years passed. I loved him. He loved me but finally I was simply flooded within myself by many things that I could not follow. My Guru was trapped on all sides. He knew it. The prakriti was running down. One day, he said to me: "I know your mind. You are working hard for me but you wish to be free."

He blessed me and said: "I give you full freedom. I know that you are not going to bow down to anyone. I make you free."

But disciples who don't want to be free and they are many, what about them?

That *sādhu* you have met here in Calcutta, with a white beard, is now at the head of the whole ashram with its many branches in every district of Bengal. He is trapped too and suffers from his entanglement. He is reigning but not ruling any more. So, of the thousand people around him there are

perhaps only a few souls who are free. Does he recognize them?

15

A question is often asked: "Can we go beyond the veil which hides the face of Truth?" Yes, we can. But what allows us to come back remains secret.

There is a secret light, a secret music, and a secret touch, vision, audition, and a tactile sensation which resounds and vibrates. But one must be very well trained to become aware of it, otherwise it is just an outside impression. A long discipline is required to become finer and lighter, in order to be more and more sensitive to oneself. What I call eating, seeing, hearing, thinking, are all experiences that should be carefully watched. It should be done through your awareness. But so many texts, opinions and quarrels, have been piled upon this fact that it has hidden itself.

If you are daring enough to look at what is now you will discover that time means nothing. At this very moment you can leap across infinite stretches. Carry on! The long preparation gone through will bring you to a state of communion between spirit and matter, a wonderful idea which is behind the idea of consecrated food (*prasāda*) shared between God and the devotee. It will bring you to the words of Christ offering his flesh and his blood and saying, "This is the bread you are eating, and this is the wine you are drinking. You are eating my body."

To bring the secret back to light you must first of all realize, deep within yourself, that nobody is going to help you. You alone can make the pilgrimage towards the inner being. You must feel that you are blessed to have been chosen to do it. You walk alone and nobody will look at you. The *Katha Upanishad* says so.

We can help others just a little, in a very indirect way, by expressing such things as: don't do that, don't hurt others, don't steal, don't tell a lie. So just be conscious of that and become more and more sensitive about it. It makes the

teacher very humble. All the work on self-observation is only to become sensitive, nothing else.

16

There is a kind of chemical process going on within us, without our knowing it, when our mind meets a new facet of knowledge. We think: "I have grasped the subject."

Yet it creates a state of confusion in your mind when you discover that you cannot express it. It lies dormant for a long time within you, then suddenly you stumble on it and a new world opens up for you; though you are in the same darkness on other planes. For a second, it is like the face of God eluding you! You run after it. You can't catch hold of it. You get intoxicated. Then it is your turn to play hide and seek with God. It is like different colours blending and reflecting one another and forming something which passes all understanding and surpasses feeling. Yet it is there.

As for that, there is a good story. When Chaitanya¹ travelled South, he discovered a book written several centuries earlier which recounted the life of a saint whose name was Vilwamangala.

The story runs something like this:

In his youth, he had loved a prostitute so much that when he was called to his father's funeral ceremony, he said to the priest: "Come on, finish your job as quickly as you can; I have an engagement elsewhere!"

Hearing that, the people around him said: "What a mad fellow, what a fool!" As soon as the ceremony ended, he rushed away and ran as far as the shore of the river he had to cross. It was a stormy night and the waves were running high. There was no ferry-man, no boat, nothing. Suddenly he saw something floating on the water. He clasped it and paddling with his feet swam across the river. Again he ran and ran until he reached the prostitute's house. There he saw a rope hanging from her balcony. He grasped it and

¹ A Bengali poet and reformer of great renown (1485-1527).

climbed up and reached her room through the window.

"How is this," said the woman quite surprised, "You at this unearthly hour! What brought you here?"

"But you called me," he said.

"Did I call you? How did you cross the river? It must be swollen by now."

"Yes, but there was a boat."

She exclaimed: "But you stink horribly. What have you done?" There were worms and maggots all over him.

He said pathetically: "Well, I suppose the boat must have been a corpse in the river."

"Go away, go away," shouted the woman.

"No, I will not," said the man, "because you called me. You even dropped a rope for me from your balcony."

"Did I indeed? Let me see!"

They both went outside and saw not a rope hanging from the balcony but a dead snake, with its head stuck in a hole. It must have struggled hard to free itself but once its head was caught, it could not slip back. So the dead serpent had been taken for a rope!

The woman was crying. "You are mad," she said, "a fool to run after a prostitute like me! With such tremendous love within you, you could have found Krishna in your heart in a moment!"

The man was shaken. "Is it so," he said, "is it true?" Suddenly his eyes opened. He prostrated himself before the woman and said: "Well, you are my Guru! You have shown me the light! I have been blind for so many years..." and he turned away.

He really became mad, running after Krishna: "Where is Krishna? Where is *my* Krishna?" For days and days, he ate next to nothing; he kept running about, pining for Krishna. Then, one day, he met a young cowherd boy of dark blue complexion who milked a cupful of milk for him.

"Where have you come from?" asked the man. "Don't disturb me. I am searching for Krishna. I am living with Krishna in my heart."

"But you called me," said the boy, "so I came. You should drink this milk, it is for you."

The man could not resist. He drank the milk. The boy appeared again the next day, giving him more milk, and so it went on for several days. Then suddenly it occurred to the man: "But I am getting attached to this boy! I don't think of Krishna any more, I am constantly thinking: Will that boy come again? What am I doing?"

So he said to the boy: "Don't come back again to me!" But the boy said: "I must come! You have called me. Promise me not to go mad again. Live, come to grips once more with life."

"I can't do that," said the man. "I must know Krishna!"

"Then why do you run after me?" asked the boy.

Somehow the man was fascinated. He said: "Come here! Let me touch you!" And suddenly he grabbed hold of the boy from behind: "I love you," he said, "you are *my* Krishna! You can't deceive me. You are in my heart! What can I do?"

"Let me go!" said the boy.

"I have got hold of you, I will not let you go. Can you escape from my heart?"

"Yes, I am Krishna," said the boy revealing himself. "I can't go from your heart, neither can you from mine! We are forever together. I am now your slave!"

Sometimes it is difficult to reach God! At the end everything becomes simple as love dawns in the heart. But then love must be without attachment. It is a reciprocal self-giving. You give to the Lord and the Lord gives to you. Through love you find the way you could not find through knowledge.

Our "freedom" lies in having accepted the fact that everything is recorded somewhere and that the *present* we are living now is a kind of luminous vigilance which connects

our inward life to our outer life with a feeling, which is coming from above. But it is also a feeling deeply rooted in us. It is not that I don't know anything about it: I know that although on the one hand I am free, on the other hand, I am bound by everything. And when I express it in words, it adds up to a flat contradiction!

Inwardly it is not so. I view the *same* existence through different moods. For instance, imagine that you are looking at a table. A table has usually four legs, but if you look at it from a certain angle, it appears to have only three legs. If you stand above it, it appears to have no legs at all! All these differences are only due to our shortsightedness. At a glance we cannot see the whole of existence! For we either taste mystery, mysticism, fulfilment or else despair, fear and hate. Life is shrewd in every way!

It remains our privilege to be able to transcend all things. Such transcendence does not mean negation; it means accepting all things as they are but not caring about them not being attached to them. Then, another dimension is reached. That dimension is pure joy. It is bliss like the smile of a child. How do you explain a child's smile? It expresses the Ananda-Brahma which is deep within you. A child can be very naughty; one moment he smiles, the next moment he makes an ugly face! In such a moment you experience life as it is!

At the close of your life, after a full existence of suffering with happy and sad days — you feel at the end that it all comes to nothing. Who am I to face God? What is it all about? Just enter into your ownself and everything goes back into order!

One day I was holding a glass ball in my hand. Suddenly, I don't know why, I threw it on to a stone. It broke into many parts. I picked up two parts and saw that they fitted quite well; then I hunted for the other parts. They also fitted. "Strange," I thought, "if I put these parts together, they become a perfect globe, otherwise they will be lying scattered!" This has been a great teaching in my whole life.

I thought: "I shall accept everything as parts of a whole. I shall not make them fit together according to my plan, but allow them to fit together. That might have to do with a child, with a woman, with a flower, or even a god incarnate." Then I felt a great peace within myself. I could forgive others.

Now you might ask: "What was that great force which made you throw the ball against a stone?" I don't know. Within myself there was a sort of dialogue going on. The ball was asking: "Are you going to crush me into pieces? Are you then going to bring all the broken pieces together? You are very extravagant!" I was thinking: "Am I really extravagant? Well, why not greet everybody and whatever happens with a smile? It is worth trying!"

There are some Hindi verses which the sages have been repeating for a long time:

"Take joy in everybody,
sit with everybody,
take the name of everybody.
Whatever is heard,
said or done,
keep to your task,
don't move an inch from it."

(Tulsidas)

I well know that people are not equal to that task. They will not go the whole way with me. They get quickly tired — after two hours, two days or two years — because they don't belong to infinity. Infinity is freedom. Because I am free I can toil. But don't let them see it. They would not understand anyway.

But I am afraid that freedom cannot be reached in one lifetime. It is a long task. As you pass on, vista after vista rises before you; then in all humility you drop on your knees and say: "I surrender, I surrender!"

There is no end before you. I can't help you more than I do. Yes, sometimes you come to me and offer me some sweet candy. I can suck it. I have pleasure in it, but that is

all! Whereas death is without end, and after death, it is again without end. So from death on, a new dimension starts.

Very true! I see it like this: I have been coming up to a certain point which is nearing death. Then I see that whatever I have been doing is just like a big rehearsal. What was at the extreme bottom comes now to the top and what was at the top is now coming down. And the meeting point is the "I." I am the meeting point.

And that "I", if you are speaking of death, goes down and melts into the ocean like pure water into the waves. But again this pure water is changed into vapour and rises in the form of clouds, to return like rain to the ocean. Similarly, every day before our eyes, the sun is going up and going down. The worshippers of the sun are fully identified with it. They say: "Like the sun, I shall disappear; like the sun I shall come again, but *not the same!*"

That brings us to the revolving movements of the sun: solstice, equinox and so on. You can feel that beautiful spiral movement deep within you. Within that process, I am quiet and calm. I know I have had my share of life, with enjoyments and difficulties and that's all. Life is all in parts, but there are so many "I's:" I am this man, this woman, that flower — all these things I am! Here is a rogue, a saint, and there an incarnation of a god! So many "I's" all around, this way, that way! Well, it means self-multiplying. When God said: "Go, and multiply yourself," He uttered a great creative Truth.

We are trying to multiply others and to multiply ourselves. Why do I preach? Because I want to multiply. Why do I speak? Because my dogma is 'the only Truth,' not yours! So everything becomes a hotch-potch and that is why we have such a load of news every morning in the newspapers!

From whence does it come that I can suddenly grasp what goes on within myself? It is a mystery.

It might be an entirely new element coming from some other plane unknown to me. Nobody can help me in this. Nobody knows anything about it! Therefore I am struck down. Our thinking always clings to something that we know, even if we feel we should be ready to meet the unknown. But it eludes me. I don't know what it is.

During a moment of concentration, all that I have accumulated drops away: book knowledge, teachings of the different schools and Masters I have met. Only what I am at that very moment exists: I am facing a naked Truth.

Here in a flash, is the difference between knowledge and Truth. It catches you up, says the *Kena Upanishad*, with a sublime feeling. It is the instant when the son of man becomes the Son of God.

But the mystery remains between the known and the unknown. Don't try to compel the unknown to translate itself into the known. It would only mean a repetition of what has already been. It would mean no progress.

In speaking of eternity, I have already told you about the linear movement going up and coming down and about the circular movement, like that of two dolphins, turning around each other. The two movements are on the same level of consciousness. How can they become only one spiral movement, like the one we see on a conch shell? When the mud on the potter's wheel revolves on a spindle, that is, when the potter has placed a stick in the centre of the wheel, then the mud rises. And the potter has only to shape the mud to make a pitcher out of it.

Similarly *śakti* in itself is the power that climbs up toward the Absolute. At the same time, it is also the spindle around which the inner movement of our search and the mechanical circular movement of our life, are moved. It is a mystic realization.

But be very careful! You should not keep on moving in a circle! See to it that the thread of your inner movement, like a screw, comes closer and closer and, finally, like a rocket, shoots beyond! Here Patanjali comes to our aid in

speaking of the three different movements along the way of our search: "Have a resolute will to withdraw from the mechanical movements of your life; allow no compromise with anything or with any dogma; break progressively away toward inner withdrawal. But be very patient."

19

Everyone in his own way tries to understand the other, but it rarely happens! This is quite natural because there is such a variety of human beings. It makes you want to smile at them all as at so many children around you. You can love them all!

As they grow, they all want you to fit in with their wishes, to be like this or like that, just as I, myself, am wishing them to be like me! This is because God created man in His own image! That is God's labour! He can only create in His own image, wishing everyone to become God.

The very word "God" includes complete freedom. God is free. His creation is a free act. God has not been compelled to create. This creation is a play of power unfolding itself in a natural way, just as the tree produces fruit.

Many come forward but only a few are really seeking, eager to know what power is. Although everyone is made in the image of God, the time is not ripe for everyone. One is perhaps only a small child within himself, another is a boy, another a grown-up man, another a god! Time is very important. You will find this mentioned repeatedly in the *Bhagavatam*,¹ where it is said: "The first creative impulse must be translated into time." A beautiful image expresses it further: "Time when flowing is called Kala," meaning a succession of things. Yes, new things are constantly added to old things. But we don't want old things any more! We want only new things! Rabindranath Tagore once said, with a smile: "Well, let us say that they are new, but it is only the old things coming again and again, and you think they

¹ A sacred Book containing 332 chapters consisting of 18,000 verses.

are new! They are the oldest things returning."

That is time: a constant succession, looked upon as changes, flowing into infinity; then all changes are simply absorbed into the Void, which is also called the Great Kala.

How does time flow into space? There is a moment when time and space become one because they are the same thing on two different levels. In a flash, time becomes space. But the constant coming out, going in, coming in, going out, is time.

When we have an intuition of what is beyond it starts with time; this intuition must be translated into pure space. It is Einstein who said that time and space are one. He used a single word 'time-space.' This means that we are in fact thinking in terms of space.

This particular house, a finished product, occupies a definite space, but how long did it take to be built up and to grow? This is where time comes in. As it is being built it passes through many processes.

What is a process? It is a succession of movements. It is a reality, but what is this reality? Is it one or many things together? Well, when we look at a tree, we see one thing, but at the same time we see the trunk, the branches, the leaves, the veins in the leaves and so on. It is the same with a house when it is built up. It is one and also many things together.

Here the philosophy of the Void comes in and says: "Such is the Void that is beyond your understanding! You see the development of the movement and at the same time go beyond that!" This is mysticism and love. Suppose two loving people are embracing each other. In this tiniest moment, the whole universe vanishes. They feel eternity. This moment contains the eternity which is space — this eternity is either a linear movement going up, coming down, or a circular movement like that of the two dolphins turning around each other.

In our age of technology, we are concerned only with movements and the succession of movements. We have gone

to the moon, we are trying to reach far away planets, one day we shall go to the sun! But in a single moment of consciousness, we can have the whole universe within us. What do you say to that? The universe is only a point of space that contains eternity. Here space and time are combined; space is consciousness, Shiva, while time is a succession of movements, *śakti*. We can say that India stands for Shiva, with closed eyes, and the West for *śakti*, with so many things going on. They are not two different existences, but two facets of the same power. There is an image of *śakti* given in the *Tantras* showing Kali, the goddess of time, crushing the whole universe into a pulp and swallowing it. It goes into her belly, which becomes a great power with millions of regrets. Remember always that Kali is time!

Think of the tremendous *śakti* you have within you. But it must be without any trace of ego. Look at a cupful of milk. The milk is homogeneous throughout. In scientific terms it would be called the colloidal state. Your power likewise must be pure and homogeneous.

If you put citric acid into the milk, it breaks up into millions of tiny little particles. It has been changed into the crystalloid state. If there are traces of ego in your self, millions of dots of ego are likewise going to spread all over. What was one whole gets broken into tiny little particles — although these colloidal and crystalloid states are basically the same milk.

If you have the whole universe within you, you are the pure power of *śakti*. If you see the whole universe covered with so many dots, with so many particles — which are the ego — the power of *śakti* becomes the three thousand millions of Hindu gods and all the Gurus of India!

Now, let us see what the *ṛsis* say in the *Atharvaveda*¹: “Look at all these people on earth. They are all Shiva walking on earth!” Similarly I would say: “Every Christian walking on earth is Christ, every Mahommedan, the Prophet” — even if I am stabbed for uttering such a blasphemy!

¹ The Fourth Veda.

I also say: "Everybody on earth is Brahma walking on two legs!" Nowadays in the villages, peasants will say, pointing to one of them: "Look at this little Brahma! Look at him, he is really trapped! He has set his foot on the trap of the five elements, and now, look, he is wailing!" Maybe it is only humour, perhaps rather cruel!

20

The notion of space is always difficult to grasp. It leads us to life and also to death. I learned this when I was quite young. My father and my mother would rise very early in the morning, take their baths and sit side by side before a picture of their Guru who, later on, became also my Guru. And they would meditate for a long time. We had a small house; when the curtain was drawn back, I would stare at them from my bed. They sat motionless, so still! That stillness made me full of awe. And I thought: "There must be something in that stillness." So, after a while, I began to imitate them and I felt: "Oh! so this is what they have!" It was Life connected with the life all around me.

And there is another thing related to death, which also came very naturally to me when I was a boy of ten. A few of my school friends and I used to go and bathe in the river. The river was dry in the summer. There was only a thin stream with a strong undercurrent, which people avoided when they crossed it. One day, when we were playing there, splashing in the water, I suddenly saw a whirlpool and heard the boys shouting: "Come back, come back!" As I was swiftly carried downstream, I said to myself: "How is this? I was with them and now I am going away from them."

Suddenly, I remembered that there was an undercurrent somewhere, and I felt that I was caught in it. Then, where was I drifting to? Toward what? I had read in books that all rivers run into the sea. "So, I am going to the sea." I thought: "And what is waiting for me there? Nothing but water. So this is death approaching. Yes, death." I closed

my eyes and thought: "I will float on."

I very often use these words: "Float on" — when speaking with people. That was my first feeling of consciously floating on: "I float on, I float on." With closed eyes, I saw nothing. Suddenly, my head bumped against something. I had simply crossed the current and come to the opposite shore. My head had struck the steps that came down into the river. I let down my legs and felt ground under my feet.... "Well, that was death and this is life!"

I told no one about what had taken place, but it surely gave me an inner illumination and a sort of security. I thought: "Everywhere and in everything, I shall be floating on, and one day I shall come to the vast ocean." This is the whole of life, and from this you come to understand the words written in the Scriptures: "I am Shiva! I have conquered death...."

When, later on, I heard these words uttered by worshippers of Shiva, what did they convey to me? First, a feeling and knowledge of the infinite. You have to bind the two together. Everywhere you will see that first the bud appears and then the fruit. But in the case of gourds and pumpkins, you will see that the fruit appears first, a tiny fruit and then the flower opens on its top. If God's feeling comes to you first, then His aura of knowledge is a splash of wisdom! Do you then still want books?

Who chose it to be that way? The free will of God. Why the bud first and then the fruit? Why not the fruit first and then the flower? I plucked a tiny pumpkin and dissected it with a knife. I found very tiny seeds nestling inside it, preparing for future plants. And so it goes on and on. Life runs smoothly in its own fashion. The mind alone wants to know more, and still more, of the things which separate what feeling is from what knowledge is. Let the mind rest a while. Let it sleep and quiet itself, otherwise there is no chance of consciousness. People will learn this by and by and consciously experiment with life. No hurry and no worry. It should just be like the coming to bloom of a flower.

The notion of matter and anti-matter is also a difficult concept to grasp though it refers to space. Formerly we knew of electrons with a negative charge, protons with a positive charge, and neutrons with no charge at all, as the constituents of an atom, which is the ultimate particle of matter as commonly understood. Now we hear about a host of mystery particles called anti-electrons, anti-protons, anti-neutrons, mesons, etc., whose existence has been proved experimentally. These mystery particles are the basis of the concept of anti-matter.

The interesting thing about the concept of anti-matter is that it destroys the commonly accepted idea of "empty space." It was found that apart from the ordinary electrons which rotate around the atomic nucleus, there is an incalculable number of "extraordinary" electrons distributed throughout the so-called empty space, which for long escaped detection by any experimental observation. The empty space really is an ocean packed to capacity with extraordinary electrons, only a few of which come out in an overflow from this ocean.

This ocean surrounds us on all sides and extends to infinity in all directions. This is the ocean of anti-matter composed of electrons with a negative mass. These are formed not out of nothing, but at the expense of the energy spent in their formation, according to Einstein's laws of equivalence of mass and energy.

So, in the final analysis, the notion of mass disappears and we are left with the conclusion that matter, as well as anti-matter, is after all nothing but energy. But since we are conscious beings observing these things, there must be three ultimate principles in Nature, namely consciousness, energy, and matter conjoined with anti-matter. Regarded philosophically, they have to be taken together as forming a complete entity. These are the three qualities: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* of Samkhya, forming a complete unity.

Prakriti and Purusha joined together stand as the neutral principle, immobile above them, initiating all movements in manifestation. This is also the "immovable mover" in Greek philosophy, and can readily be observed by an interiorization of self-consciousness through *yoga*.

We should note that Patanjali's Godhead¹ is none other than the "extraordinary Purusha," who remains unaffected by the movements of the manifestation. When a man by turning inward attains this immobility in self-consciousness, which is the duality of matter and anti-matter, he reaches directly the plane of God-awareness. This is what the Christian mystics called: the "Flight of the alone in the Alone to the Alone." This can be achieved only by living within oneself.

So, finally, God is the Lord of matter and anti-matter, which together make up His Energy residing in and suffusing the whole world known to us through our senses. Once this is realized, the mystic sees with open eyes, "His Signature" in the whole pervading energy.

And that Signature is what we have called the Void.

There we touch a point referring to the two dolphins. Why do they turn around each other without stopping? Can one assume an axis around which they turn; but where does the movement come from?

There is something similar in our own body. The spinal column goes like a neon rod from the crown of the head to the place where an animal has its tail. From head to tail. Now you can imagine it as not being straight, but like a serpent within striking upward to the crown of the head with its hood. What is real is the streak of light along the spine. All along that streak of light tiny and very alive atoms are pulsating. I also discovered it in the cosmic ray in the body coming from overhead. From where does this pulsating come? One can say it is an impulse that comes from nowhere, but this mere thought gives to your body, your mind, and your soul — such wonderful poise and illumination!

¹ Ishvari, the highest conception of a personal God.

It is an opening up of everything in you. So you don't live by bread alone by just so many proteins and carbohydrates!

This is the teaching among the Bauls. The Baul says: "What are you going to reject? You reject one thing, you throw it outside yourself, then immediately life in another form comes and feeds upon it. Are you able to reject life, the universal life? No! So purify everything. Don't say there is impurity. Don't say there is sin." Everything is light, perceived as such only in a higher state of consciousness.

What wonderful teaching! Such people are saints, saints of God walking on earth; they are Christs.

22

It was in the dead of night. I heard these words very distinctly: "You go to sleep. From sleep you go to death. Through death you awake to the Void."

What was that? I heard the words. I listened to them. I followed them. I closed my eyes, tried to sleep and forget everything. Sometimes I keep awake for hours. That night I suddenly saw that sleep was coming so I remained quiet and tried to see how I was dying in my sleep. I saw that it was simply slipping into the Void nowhere, and that there was light, an illumination that was the "presence," the eternal presence of something which I cannot describe. I call it the Void. I could also call it God, or Purusha, or Brahma, or our Father in Heaven. Then a tremendous energy possessed me. There was light in my heart. It grew. Then there was a wonderful peace, an awareness....

I remembered, it is said in the *Katha Upanishad*, that the young boy Nachiketas, who went into the House of Death stayed there three nights. He ate and drank nothing.

Vaivaswata, the Lord of Death, was on tour gathering victims from this world. When he came back, his servants ran to him saying: "An honoured guest has arrived. For three days, he has touched neither food nor drink. The Laws of hospitality have not been obeyed. O Lord of Death,

go and wash his feet with fresh water!"

"My boy," said Vaivaswata, "what do you want from me?"

"I wish to go back to earth."

"Very good! For the three nights you have been here without food or drink, I give you three wishes. You have told me the first one. What else do you wish for?"

"When I go back, I wish that my father may know me again. It is hard to recognize one who comes back after having been dead." (This is what occurred at the resurrection of Christ. Nobody knew Him again.)

"Yes, your father will know you again. What is your last wish?"

"Tell me whether I exist here or do not exist? What is this, fantasy or reality?"

Vaivaswata was taken aback. He said: "What a question! Even the gods don't know whether they are or are not in death. Well, back on earth, enjoy all the things of the world: men, servants and all the women you want. Just play with them all."

The boy interrupted him: "Yes, I shall take everything that life offers me. But now that I have seen you, I want an answer to my question. You must reply!"

"Well, well, how obstinate you are! I am going to answer your question."

What follows is the whole of the *Katha Upanishad*. The gist of it is: just as pure water dropping into an ocean of pure water exists, so does this body, soul, and everything melting into it, become one. It is a luminous state.

Vaivaswata goes on: "You have been a Brahmin boy on earth. You have seen your father perform sacrifices, make offerings and dedicate himself; everything thrown into the fire burns, the flames rise and flash into the intermediate world of lightning.

"Beyond that there is the state of the dazzling sun illuminating the mind, and still farther, where the light softens to moonlight, there is the state of intuition. It is filled with

a mystic feeling. Beyond that you rise to the stars into a consciousness which is cosmic and infinite. Piercing through it is *sat-cit-ānanda*."

The last lines of the *Upanishad* read as follows: "There, there is no light, no sun, no moon, not even the stars. There is no lightning, no fire. But everything shines in the dark shining of death, which illumines everything."

If we don't meet again, don't feel that I am not. I am pure Existence. *Om śānti, śānti, śānti*.

Whatever I may say from now on will simply be the same thing said in a different way. Whatever we explain is only one way among many ways. The Void is everywhere.

23

Concentration should be turned towards ourselves — turned towards the self. It is an interiorized attention upon the self which in itself is nothing.

You must forget everything. You know only one thing, that you *are*. You feel deeply that you *are*. Do you remember that phrase in the Bible: "I am that I am?" It was quoted like this and Moses heard it in the burning bush. Later on, when he described it, he said: "Well, I didn't, at that time, say: I am that I am."

So you see, God-consciousness and self-consciousness — both become *one*. They form together one total reality. I feel that I am dependent upon That: *That* is the greater one, and *this* is the lesser one, but they are tied together just like clasped fingers. So I can say: "I rise up to you and stretch out my hands" and That says to me: "I come down to you."

Then, just at that moment, another process starts, between I and That. The duality remains for a long, long time. It is simply a very bad habit that we have acquired when while awake, we begin to say: "I have to think of God, I have to pray, I have to find Him out." These physical words are

used when we are relying on our senses. But in a state of concentration the object becomes very clear and illumined, while the "I," myself, remains misty. Yet, I feel that I am talking and that I am seeing. What is that "I"? Nothing! If you pursue this line and go deeper within yourself, you will see that the subject and the object finally come together and something, without your knowing it, is deposited within you. You might think: "I have understood what goes on. I know." But no! You *feel* that you know nothing. At that very moment, you must let yourself go and abandon yourself fully to the mystery.

You have to be patient with yourself and repeat this experience again and again. Each time you will only get, like the touch of a brush, a patch of colour! If you repeat it again, then another patch! And so on for a very long time. Finally all becomes quiet and clear within you. The Law of densities takes its course.

First you will again think: "Oh! I know that! I have got that, all is well!" But you have to feel the different degrees of densities in your thinking. When you think with words it is with the density of the earth. Your thoughts are mechanical; you utter perhaps great words, but you are like a parrot repeating words. This kind of thinking must be thrown back into the fire of experience to make it become liquid.

There is a liquid thinking in which the words have the density of water. On the ordinary plane, this thinking jumps from here to there, from there to here without end and finally reaches nowhere. But if it is the thought of a prophet or of a poet, it goes from here to there; like water being spilt from a jar it has to go somewhere. Liquid thought spreads because it has the fluidity of water.

The notion of liquid thinking comes from the *Katha Upanishad*, in which Nachiketas put that very question to the Lord of Death: "Am I here? Am I not here? When I leave my body, what becomes of my awareness?" And the Lord of Death answered: "It is just as though pure water

were poured into an ocean of pure water. The two come together and there is only one." That is why the mystics everywhere in the world have spoken of the sea as the origin of life. The Vedic seers also say: "The sky is an ocean, the heart is an ocean...."

It is that pure state of liquidness, of vastness, which means freedom. Water in a glass takes on a shape, though water is not confined to one form but to endless forms. Water does not remain fixed in any particular form. Do away with all forms, have that freedom, that plasticity! This quality of being I found in Shri Ramakrishna. It thrilled me! He could identify himself with anything he liked and become it. Then immediately afterwards, he could throw it off and become another thing.

If liquid thinking is the second state, the third one is the state of luminous thinking, when you hardly utter any word but radiate your thoughts with a look or a gesture. From here on, everything is subject to the principles of radiation. In this room, light is something which gives form to everything. There is nothing in the light itself. If there is light during the day, there is darkness during the night. Light and darkness are the two dolphins sporting together. A transfiguration arises from their two bodies in movement: this line and that line together are forming a circle. It is the symbol of pure life! And beyond that is the Void which contains everything and at the same time is Nothing.

Light which is formless, and which at the same time gives form to everything, has been represented in pictures by the halo round the heads of saints. The Buddhist scriptures say the Buddha had a wide halo surrounding his whole body.

When you speak to people remain turned inward. Feel from within a halo around you. Then people will come to you without even knowing it. This is the radiation principle which works in both directions: a radiation which is both outward and inward.

Then there is the fourth state: it is a touch-thinking which touches directly the heart of others. When all inhibi-

tions are shed you go deeper within yourself. Then no word is used. The vibration of the soul resounds in the soul of others, a vibration which can be transmitted without any ostensible means, even from the other extremity of the earth. Silent prophets have used that Sound alone. The silence then becomes the Word. Beyond this is the Logos — God as the Word. This is speaking from the Void whence the mystics say: "Creation comes from the Void; Creation and the Word are one."

In this way you expand into the Void. But the Void does not pin you down because it has no boundary. You fill it. The impact on you is that you feel no boundary: "I am that I am!" It comes to that formula for which the Christ was crucified, the Sufi murdered. Only Buddha escaped that destiny, though he had many antagonists in his lifetime and still has!

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The liquid body is the life principle. I talk, spend energy, meet people, eat, grow. It is all through this body which is lying here, suffering, blind, inert — a heavy body (*tamas*) infused with power (*rajas*).

After that comes the body of the mind (*sattva*), when the thoughts are more subtle.

Then comes the body of intuition (*buddhi*), when life plays with life, when it is no longer the body playing with the body.

When many foci of intuition come together a tremendous power is born. Then a revolution is created; it assumes a form like a new incarnation. Then the gross body, the liquid body, the mind body, are all forgotten. And the Void is beyond.

I touch it, just as I am here on solid earth which will not give way. But do I want to test it? No. I let myself live like a child, taking everything for granted and looking at everything with wide open eyes.

And that gives me freedom.

I have analysed my dreams and discovered that up till now I have never dreamt that I am lying here. I am always moving about, going along here, going along there. Even though I am resting here, at the same time I am moving very fast. I remember the beautiful description of Brahma's wanderings given in the *Isha Upanishad*: "He rests, he sits quiet and at the same time he travels far distances. He is lying on his back, though he is moving everywhere."

The mind is a wonderful instrument when it is well tamed. Keep it always under control! Sri Aurobindo speaks of the mind, of the super-mind, meaning to see Brahma in everything. It is the most ancient teaching which appears as new. It brings people, in the end, to the wide conception and understanding that mind and love can become one. Everywhere this deep experience is the same.

Of course, it happens that some disciples want to break away from the believers who remain attached to words and to forms. Do they find happiness in that separation? No! I say to them: "Keep in the fold even if you are puzzled. Control the mind, keep it from running into your ego." Do the people who have had such a deep experience meet? Yes, sometimes. They simply gaze into each other's eyes and smile. That is all. They have nothing to say except: "You are me, I am you."

Only after Christ was crucified did He become the Son of God. As long as he preached or meditated, he was the son of man. His real nature came out only on the Cross. His commandment is: You come after me. Follow me. Ascend the Cross till you reach the Void. Be perfect as my Father in Heaven.

Yes, these years of illness have been for me a time of deep inner experiences, of many, many experiences; of deep silence also, in which Kali, the eternal time, has been flowing on.

I listen to the noises around me until midnight: shouting, quarreling, market cries, and radio — then all the noises die down.

I sleep two hours. Then, awake, I simply close my eyes and remain very, very quiet. Time flows on. This is Kali, the time's spirit, the Void. I think of Kali¹. I have been living for many years in Calcutta but I went only once to her temple. I saw her. I paid homage to her. I am not afraid of her.

It is just as if, in my imagination, I hear her voice. Then I say to her: "What do you want from my life? I give you everything. Well, you have already taken my movements, my feet, my voice, and soon you will be taking my sight. If I am lying prostrate like Shiva under your feet, if you are tramping upon me, what will you take then? Your feet might get tired, you should go to sleep somehow."

There is something wonderful — as long as I remain awake I think: "Well, I should have been dreaming, I am creating my dreams!" I see the awakened state and the great quietness that follows. If I look into it, then I suddenly know: "Well, I am awake!" It is all power. I am simply aware. All values which are put upon awareness mean nothing. Awareness is freedom to see without entering into anything. By that you throw away so much of the weight of life, so much ballast. You soar up! like a balloon.

There Samkhya comes in — how? In this way: this awareness is the Purusha within me, the Shiva aware that Kali is dancing on my chest. I am simply aware of that. She dances. I don't dictate anything. I don't wish anything. I don't love or hate. I am simply aware. Then a joy comes — a wonderful serene joy. And perhaps that joy is felt by a Kali who has thrown away all her power, who then becomes a little girl with eyes twinkling merrily for joy. She becomes herself again!

This awareness is called in the *Upanishads*: "knowing without content."

¹ The goddess representing time flowing. She is the female energy of Shiva, with two characters, one mild, the other fierce.

You see, at this very moment, I speak to you, very simply about all these things. Perhaps if I were to write them down, arguments would come and make up a big fat volume, but the whole thing that I have just been trying to make you feel is the power of one tiny movement which is like a dew drop reflecting the sun — a drop of dew seeing the sun. Then knowledge and wisdom are thrust in upon you. You know that you have been taught something great.

Tagore, when he was quite young, perhaps twenty-three, wrote a line that thrilled me: "I want to drink the infinite Void like a cup of wine." You become a lover of the Void. You are drunk with the Void. That is why I went to primitivism to see what we are made up of. We are nothing but a bubble, a spark in the universe — that is a mystery!

You feel, you are quiet, you know, that is all. You take a rest for two hours and work for twenty-two hours. That was my way in my Guru's ashram. He wrote books on *yoga*, speaking about a number of topics; I listened very patiently. I have been loyal to him, always working, but remaining myself within myself.

Just as I am now. Even now, I talk to people simply out of loyalty. If they come and ask me something, I talk to them; I am following the rules of Manu and speak only when I am asked for something. Otherwise I have nothing to speak about.

As they ask, I gradually and very cautiously draw them toward the Void. Sometimes someone has just pondered a lot. Perhaps he or she heard nothing, understood nothing, but suddenly comes to me and says: "Well, thanks to you I saw the Void!" Then I will say: "Very good! Go on!" But that happens once in a blue moon! Such is the fulfilment of life! So something must be above you, above everything: Freedom.

My Guru once said: "This darkness of the sky that you see and those lights in the form of stars, they are but one. When you know this, you will have known what Brahman is..." and then he silently walked away.